Commentary
October 2000

Crash or Boom?
On the Future of the New Economy
Irwin M. Stelzer

The Moynihan Years
James Nuechterlein

Writing Jewish
Hillel Halkin

Education and the Election
Chester E. Finn, Jr.

The Master's Ring—A Story
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Books in Review
Francis Fukuyama • Naomi Schaefer • Jay P. Lefkowitz
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Commentary
October 2000

Letters from Readers

Asian-Americans

To the Editor:

I found most of Tamar Jacoby's piece ["In Asian America," July-August] insightful and interesting, but as a recent graduate of Yale College I must protest her remark that "scarcely an Asian student at Yale has been able to withstand the lure of ethnic involvement." Although I had rather unpleasant experiences with the leadership of some of the school's ethnic groups, I felt very little pressure from either my peers or the administration to affiliate myself with them. Nor did many of my Asian-American friends—including those who studied East Asian culture—have an interest in these groups.

Even on a campus as liberal as Yale, the prevalent attitude toward the tribal drum-thumping highlighted by Tamar Jacoby is one of general indifference. The so-called ethnic leaders have always had to deal with the embarrassing fact that as much as they agitate for more courses with Asian-American themes, the turnout tends to be disappointing.

Tamar Jacoby seems to have committed the understandable error of taking the views of the most visible Asian-Americans on campus as representative of the rank and file. But few Asian-American students at Yale are true believers in the most extreme forms of ethnic balkanization. Like their counterparts elsewhere in the country, they deal with questions of identity in the balanced manner emphasized by Tamar Jacoby in the conclusion of her fine piece.

Wayne Hsieh
Charlottesville, Virginia

To the Editor:

With her recent article on Asian-Americans, Tamar Jacoby has broadened her insightful investigations into the country's racial and ethnic groups. I would add one point to her hope that "these latest newcomers might yet provide a model for other groups"—namely, the concept of a citizen's duty. After all, the "American" half of hyphenated Americans implies obligations as well as rights.

The ultimate test of such duty, of course, is service in time of war. Though Tamar Jacoby notes "the World War II-era internment of tens of thousands of innocent Japanese suspected of dual loyalty," she does not mention—perhaps because it is so well known—the distinguished military service of many other Japanese-Americans. But their example was crucial: at a time when some in the relocation centers were openly demonstrating on behalf of Emperor Hirohito, these patriotic Japanese-Americans helped win over a more than skeptical public and provided their entire group with the opportunity to live as equal fellow citizens.

Ken Masugi
Claremont Institute
Claremont, California

To the Editor:

Congratulations to Tamar Jacoby for her excellent article, one of the best on Asian-Americans I have read in a number of years. I would add only two points.

First, although the handful of Asian-American ethnic activists whom she interviewed receive considerable attention in the mainstream media, a far more significant phenomenon is the impact that socially conservative Asian-Americans are having on America's mainline Protestant churches. For example, Korean pastors strongly opposed to gay marriage and other liberal policies are currently attempting to gain leadership positions in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and to reverse the denomination's cultural tide. At the same time, the Christian-fellowship circles at most Ivy League universities are now heavily Asian-American. Such trends receive little attention because religious issues are far from the

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thoughts of most journalists.

Second, although some of the rhetoric of Asian activists regarding the Wen Ho Lee affair and the campaign-finance scandals is exaggerated, their basic complaint about unfair racial targeting has considerable merit. Lee was cleared long ago of the original espionage charge, and the only remaining charge against him—the mishandling of restricted but nonsecret data—was quite minor compared with the self-admitted practices of John Deutch, the former CIA director. Yet Lee was held for an extended period of time without bail in solitary confinement, while so far Deutch has been left to live in honorable retirement.

Similarly, the Clinton administration's "Asian-money scandal" became the focus of media coverage and Republican rhetoric during the 1996 campaign even though the amounts involved were relatively small and the Asian donors had sought nothing more than the government access and favors sought by other givers. It seems likely that the Republicans' continual emphasis on "Asian money" and "Buddhist-temple fundraisers" has to do with the demonstrated impact of such phrases in polling and focus groups, an impact derived from ethnic suspicion.

During the 1930's, 40's, and 50's, a disproportionate share of America's Communist leaders and spies were of Jewish origin. Nonetheless, all but the most irresponsible anti-Communists did what they could to ensure that America's Jewish community at large was not unfairly tainted with the charge of disloyalty. Americans in general should remember this history as they consider the sometimes uncomfortable position of groups that have immigrated to the country more recently.

RON UNZ
Palo Alto, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Tamar Jacoby quotes Sid Agrawal, "an Indian-American engineer-turned-entrepreneur," as saying, "California is so cosmopolitan, you don't have to think about ethnicity here. It just doesn't matter—to anyone." I think Agrawal's attitude is quite characteristic of the Indian-Americans in Silicon Valley, who have succeeded beyond expectations in information technology and related sectors. Their very success has meant that the glass ceiling that exists in other industries has not been a hurdle. Indeed, today it is almost mandatory for any start-up in Silicon Valley to have Indian software-professionals and managers in order to attract funding.

The attitude in the Bay Area, therefore, is somewhat different from that of the Indian-American community in other parts of California and the United States, where assimilation can be a problem even for the second generation, those who are born here. Still, Tamar Jacoby's view that the community is learning to tackle both its Asian and American identities at the same time appears, on the whole, quite valid.

R.M. ABBYANKAR
Consul General of India
San Francisco, California

TAMAR JACOBY writes:

I hope Wayne Hsieh is right and I am wrong about the way the climate on a campus such as Yale's nudges young Asian-Americans toward tribalism. But even after his encouraging testimony, I cannot say I am convinced. I met too many students who had been prodded in that direction, if not by explicit peer pressure then simply by the emphasis on identity politics in the air at so many colleges—and, whatever Mr. Hsieh may surmise, I did not interview only ethnic activists during my visits to New Haven. A good many Yalies—Asians, Latinos, blacks, and others—who stop short of joining ethnic organizations are still, in my view, unduly preoccupied with what makes them different from peers who do not happen to look like them or have a similar-sounding "foreign" surname.

Mr. Hsieh himself makes clear just how difficult the climate can be. Nothing I came across matched the chilling experience he alludes to—his own "unpleasant" encounters with leaders of Yale Asian groups. But ultimately, though a little ahead of his peers, Mr. Hsieh also makes my larger point: for all the bullying, he sounds as if he is succeeding admirably in balancing his ethnic loyalty with a larger, more universalist vision. That is just what I found again and again among Asians old enough to see beyond their campus experience—not an absence of pressure, or an absence of group spirit, but, on the whole, a healthy ability to put ethnic issues in some perspective.

I am grateful to Ken Masugi for reminding us all of the distinguished military service rendered, even during World War II, by many Japanese-Americans. It is an example from outside my time frame—my piece was a portrait of post-1965 Asian immigrants—but it makes a similar point: a picture of Asian immigrants embracing America.

So in a sense does Ron Unz's description of the way Asian-Americans are rising to positions of influence in mainline American churches and college Christian fellowships. I came across a lot of that in my reporting, and only considerations of space kept me from mentioning it. I also share Mr. Unz's intuition that there may be something to Asian complaints about ethnic targeting, both in the Wen Ho Lee case and in the 1996 campaign-finance scandal. The jury is still out on the Lee case, but Mr. Unz is surely right: there is little that is more reprehensible than people who make political hay—and racial generalizations—out of the misdeeds of a few individuals who happen to belong to ethnic minorities.

As for R.M. Abbyankar's implied suggestion that I may have presented an overly rosy picture of how Indian immigrants are faring in this country, all I can say is that other immigrant groups—and native-born Americans, for that matter—should only be having so much trouble. Assimilation is almost always a difficult, emotionally wrenching process, and I am sure there are some Indians who are having a tough time of it. But the statistical profile of the Indian community—its income, educational attainment, entrepreneurship, and family cohesion—is something to behold, and not just in Silicon Valley, where enterprising Indians have created companies with a total net worth of several hundred billion dollars. It is a record

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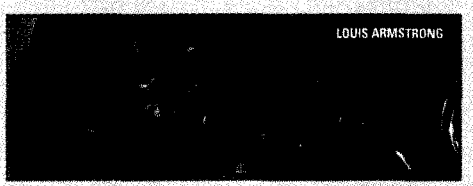

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to envy and emulate, and also a glorious example of how immigration and immigrant assimilation are good for all Americans.

In Hitler's Germany

TO THE EDITOR:

A characteristic odor of British Germanophobia pervades Daniel Johnson's otherwise informative article, "What Victor Klemperer Saw" [June]. From the most meager of anecdotal evidence, Mr. Johnson concludes that Victor Klemperer's diaries "once and for all [demolish] the myth that ordinary Germans did not and could not know about the Holocaust." There is overwhelming evidence to the contrary—namely, that the regime successfully managed to hide the Holocaust from ordinary Germans.

True, as Mr. Johnson writes, "even decent Germans were implicated by Nazi indoctrination." But anyone who has lived under a totalitarian regime knows that it is impossible to remain totally unaffected by the constant and ubiquitous assault of agitprop. It is not German, but human, nature that is weak and, alas, prey to moral cowardice.

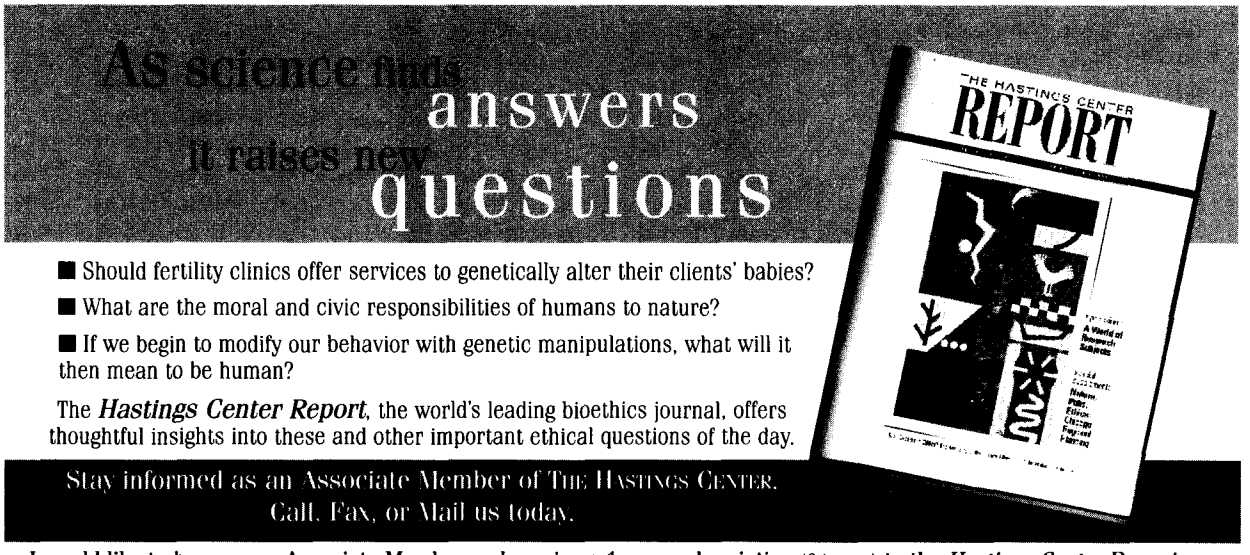
Readers who learn from Mr. Johnson that "even formerly friendly acquaintances [of Klemperer's] who were by no means Nazis . . . now cut him dead" should remember that during the McCarthy era, many innocent Americans, falsely accused and temporarily put on administrative leave from their jobs, were also "cut dead" by the neighbors with whom they had barbecued only the night before. And those "friendly acquaintances" were, unlike Germans, not living under totalitarian terror. In Nazi Germany, by contrast, people could be arrested for talking to a Jewish acquaintance in a streetcar.

FRANZ M. OPPENHEIMER
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

In his article on Victor Klemperer, Daniel Johnson deprives his readers of much information critical to judging both the diarist and his diaries.

Having endured a dozen years under the Nazis, Klemperer chose to live his remaining fifteen years under the Stalinists. The Americans liberated him in Bavaria in May 1945, but by June he was already back in Dresden, and by year's end he had joined the Communist party. It was this membership that facilitated the 1946 publication of Klemperer's *The Language of the Third Reich*. He was also able to resume his Dresden professorship, and went on to hold other



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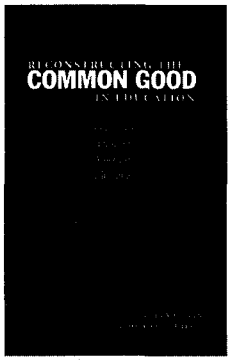

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positions in Greifswald, Halle, and, finally, Berlin. In 1950, he served as a representative in the pseudoparliament of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). In 1952, he received the GDR's National Prize for Art, 3rd Class, and in 1956 the Fatherland's Silver Service medal.

These facts shine a different light on Klemperer's response to a request by a former student and Wehrmacht major for aid in securing a job in 1947. Mr. Johnson reports that Klemperer refused the request because he correctly considered that the loyal assistance of many Germans, particularly educated Germans who should have known better, had been key to the Nazis' success. Evidently, he was not daunted by the utter inconsistency of refusing to aid his former student while he himself was loyally assisting the Stalinists, who (as he noted) were replacing one form of unfreedom with another. From 1933 to 1945 Klemperer had observed everything and learned nothing. Can Mr. Johnson think of any reason why, applying Klemperer's own standards, we should not judge him more harshly than he judged his former student?

In the end, though, I submit that the flaws Klemperer both observed and exemplified—what Daniel Johnson calls the "mentality of national self-deception and willful ignorance"—are not German but Western. They arise out of a set of ideas still dominant among the intelligentsia of not only Germany but, among others, the UK, France, and the U.S. In France, they have been promoted by intellectuals like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. In America, Richard Rorty and Stanley Fish market a more cheerful version—what Allan Bloom called nihilism without the abyss.

DOUGLAS HOFFMAN
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR:

Daniel Johnson writes much that is true, but there is so much more to be said.

Long before Hitler came to power, Victor Klemperer had converted to Christianity (though he remained a nonbeliever); he married a Christian woman, fought for the Kaiser on the Western front in World War I, and believed with all his heart and soul in Germany. And even after he was deprived by the Nazis of his professorship and most of his worldly possessions, forced to live in a "Jew House" and to beg for food and clothing, he never forsook his total loyalty to his imagined Germany. In July 1942, he wrote, "Even if I hated Germany, I would not therefore become un-German. I could not tear what is German out of me." Indeed, in the early days of the war Klemperer had to restrain his impulse to root for the Wehrmacht when it invaded Poland—all the more ironic in view of the fact that Klemperer's origins were as much Polish as German, his father having begun his career as an Orthodox rabbi in his native Poland.

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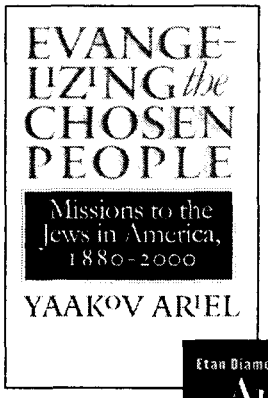

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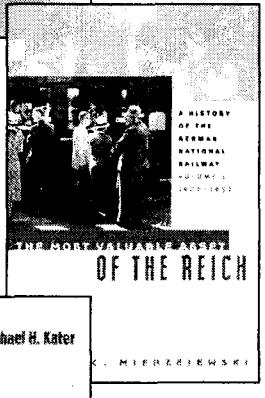

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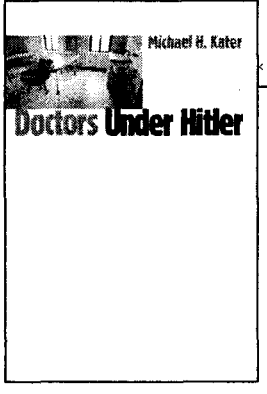

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Once the war ended, Klemperer the Jew was no longer a despised person. With Hitler gone and Germany occupied by the Allies, Germans of all descriptions discarded their Nazi allegiance and reached out to help the Klemperers. After twelve years of Nazi persecution, the Jewish-born Klemperer was alive, back in his old house, and restored to his pre-Nazi-era professorship at Dresden University. He was among the few Jews who survived; but at what cost?

Like most of his relatives, he could have escaped from Nazi Germany *before* the war. Yet he was disdainful of Jews who went to Palestine, likened Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, to Hitler, and waited too long to join relatives in America. If Victor Klemperer had been less intent on being a good German and remaining in Germany, he might well have been spared his ordeal.

One also has to question whether he survived "to bear witness." After all, he never published his diaries, and after the war he gave no thought to leaving Germany even though he could easily have emigrated to America. That he later joined the Communist party raises a further question as to Klemperer's core beliefs. What had he really learned from the Nazi ordeal? Why was he willing to trade one form of totalitarianism for another?

In reflecting on Klemperer's diaries, I have a final nagging thought. What if Victor Klemperer had succeeded in his youthful desire to shed totally his Jewish identity, and had not been forced by the Nazis to share the Jewish fate? During the Hitler years, how would he then have acted toward the sufferings of his fellow Jews?

ALFRED H. MOSES
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

My compliments to Daniel Johnson for his excellent and thorough discussion of Victor Klemperer's diaries. Whether Mr. Johnson's analysis will help put to rest the still widely held German attitude that most citizens did not participate or even know about the Nazi murder of the Jews until near the end of the war is questionable. According to a German acquaintance of mine, the fact that Klemperer knew about concentration camps and gassings and shootings almost as soon as they began proves nothing about "ordinary" Germans; rather, it is said, Klemperer learned these facts from the Jewish underground.

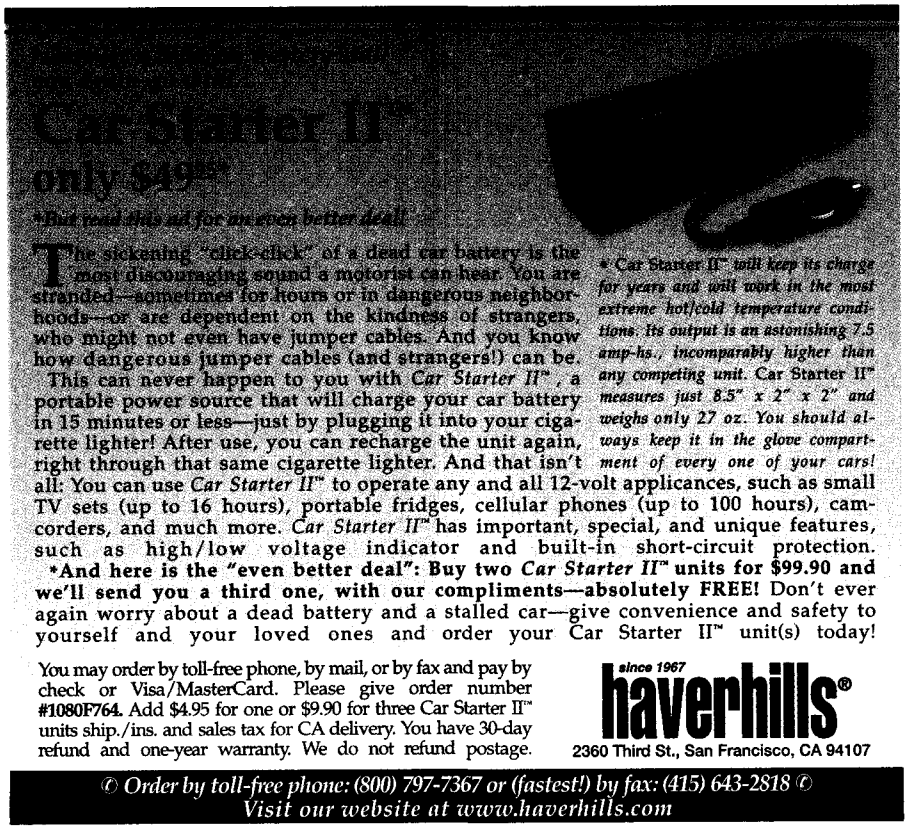
All this aside, Klemperer was certainly an intriguing figure, though typical of quite a number of self-hating German Jews who protested their Germanness all the way to the gas chambers.

HANS FISHER
New Brunswick, New Jersey

DANIEL JOHNSON writes:

I do not know what "a characteristic odor of British Germanophobia" smells like, but if Franz M. Oppenheimer means to say that Germanophobia is characteristic of the British in general, and of me in particular, he is wrong on both counts—doubly so in my case. Having written and lectured on German history, culture, and politics all my life, I find Mr. Oppenheimer's insinuation offensive.

His own knowledge of everyday life in the Third Reich is shaky, to say the least. Aryan Germans were not normally arrested for talking to Jewish acquaintances; indeed, most of them were left alone by the Gestapo. The "totalitarian terror" to which Mr. Oppenheimer refers certainly existed; but it was concentrated on the Nazis' political, religious, and racial enemies. To compare the ostracism suffered by Americans accused of Communist sympathies in the McCarthy era with the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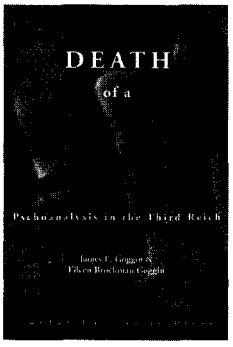

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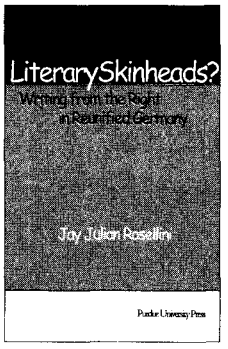

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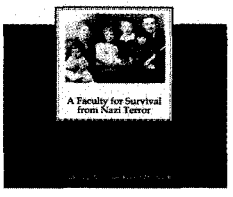

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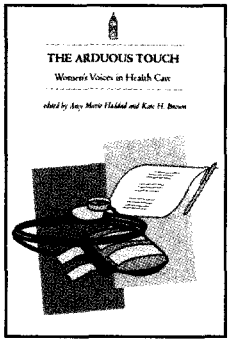

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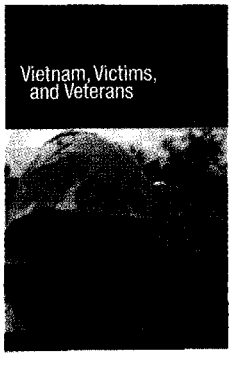

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situation of Jews in Nazi Germany is not merely tasteless but grotesque. McCarthy was rejected by most Americans as soon as he threatened the rule of law; Hitler was not rejected by most Germans even after he had abolished it.

Mr. Oppenheimer's main contention—that the Nazi regime succeeded in hiding the Holocaust from ordinary Germans—does not stand up to scrutiny. Although the evidence cannot be surveyed here, the key point is that Victor Klemperer enjoyed no privileged access to information. Along with the rest of Germany, he noticed when Hitler predicted on January 30, 1939 that war would bring about "the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe." Once the Holocaust was under way, in 1942 and 1943, Hitler often gloated over this "prophecy." By that time a substantial proportion of the 10 million German soldiers who served on the Eastern front had already witnessed or participated in the massacre of Soviet Jews. A very high proportion of German civilians listened to BBC and other Allied broadcasts, which made explicit and accurate mention of what was happening in the death camps. Thousands of German corporations profited from, tens of thousands of German bureaucrats administered, and hundreds of thousands of "ordinary" Germans carried out the extermination of European Jewry. Everyone who wanted to know could and did.

It is true that the Nazi authorities went to considerable lengths to disguise the full extent of the Final Solution. But they were no less secretive about the earlier "T-4" euthanasia campaign, during which 70,000 psychiatric patients were gassed. Yet this crime was the subject of public protests by Bishop Galen and others, which evidently garnered so much support that Galen was not arrested. In 1941 Hitler redirected the T-4 gassing units to murder inmates of the concentration camps. This time there were no protests.

Whether or not protests brought about a change in policy (patients at mental hospitals were starved or given lethal injections instead, these methods being easier to conceal), they did place definite limits on Nazi crimes. Had the churches and others shown the same moral courage in defense of the Jews, the Holocaust could not have happened on the monstrous scale that it did.

Douglas Hoffman is entitled to criticize Klemperer for returning to Dresden after the war and for resuming his career in Communist East Germany. He was not, and never claimed to be, a hero; as long as he was left alone, he had no desire to become a dissident. But unlike his former pupil, the Wehrmacht officer, Klemperer was not ordered to carry out atrocities or prosecute a war of conquest; he was permitted to teach and publish.

Klemperer's postwar diaries reveal that any illusions he might have had about Communism were soon dispelled, but he no longer had the energy to make a fresh start in the West. After all he had suffered, I am inclined to judge him less harshly than Mr. Hoffman, but I concede that this is a matter of opinion. What is certain is that his diaries will be no less valuable to historians of Communism than to those of the Third Reich.

I am grateful to Alfred H. Moses and Hans Fisher for their courteous comments. Mr. Moses raises a fascinating hypothetical question: if this deeply patriotic German had succeeded in shedding his Jewish identity entirely, might he have become an anti-Semite? Mr. Fisher likewise sees him as a "self-hating German Jew." Voluminous as the diaries are, they can be used to support this view, but also its opposite. Klemperer was undoubtedly ambivalent about his Jewishness, and was capable of harsh and occasionally unjust remarks about other Jews. Anti-Semitism, however, was repellent to him for objective as well as subjective reasons: it was the essence of all that he feared and abominated in Germany, not merely as a Jew but also as an intellectual.

That most ordinary Germans knew and tacitly consented to what was happening to the Jews is the most disturbing fact to emerge from the Klemperer diaries. It is also a fact that some Germans—and not only Germans—find hard to accept. Whether, like Mr. Oppenheimer, one blames "not German, but human, nature," or like Mr. Hoffman, indicts "not German but Western" self-deception, the fact remains that the Holocaust was perpetrated not by humanity or the West in general but by the Germans in particular. To acknowledge this fact, and try to understand the reasons for it, is the duty not only of the Germans but of us all, Jews and Gentiles alike.

Intervention

TO THE EDITOR:

Adam Wolfson is missing a point in his contrasting of humanitarian and nonhumanitarian interventions ["How to Think About Humanitarian War," July-August]. The primary purpose of the war in Kosovo was to punish ethnic cleansing, and thereby deter further atrocities. The U.S. learned a valuable lesson from Munich—namely, that law and order need to be enforced, and doing so is in our national interest. Moreover, the U.S. air force and navy are sufficiently powerful to punish any wrongdoer (except for states with nuclear capabilities) without suffering large casualties.

The promotion of democracy, on the other hand, is much more difficult and requires prolonged occupation by ground troops (as was the case in West Germany and Japan after World War II).

In 1948, the Arab states in the Middle East openly threatened ethnic cleansing ("throwing the Jews into the sea"). It took Israel several punishing wars and retaliatory raids to persuade Egypt, Jordan, the PLO, and, possibly, Syria to come to the negotiating table. All this may have deterred some future conflicts; it did not bring democracy to the Arab world.

MARCEL R. SCHMORAK
Oak Ridge, Tennessee

TO THE EDITOR:

Contrary to the title of Adam Wolfson's article, there are no humanitarian wars; there are simply just wars and unjust wars. Any war worthy of the name—and our assault on

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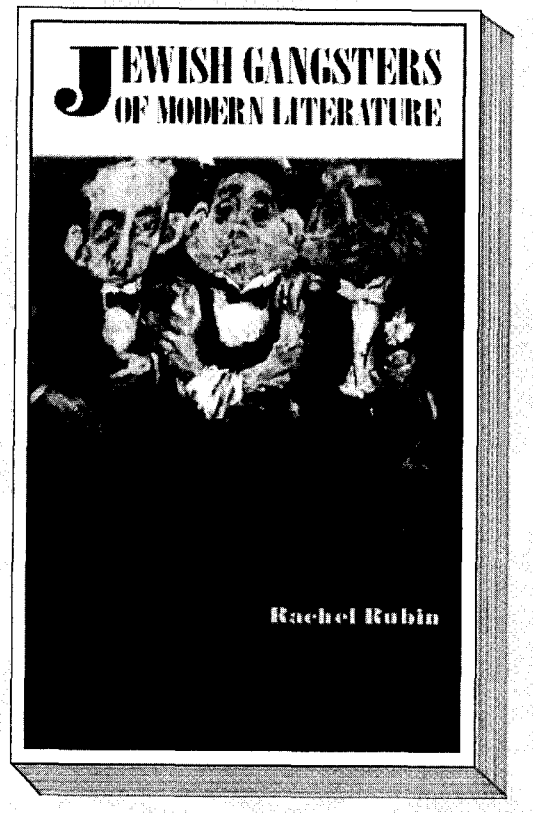

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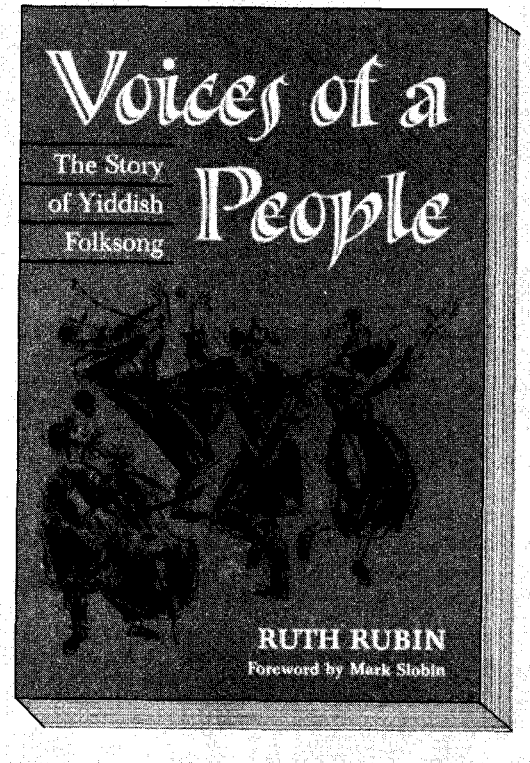

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Jerusalem (I)

Whose city – whose "holy city" – is it?

It's thirty-three years, since Israel's victory in the Six-Day War in 1967, that the city of Jerusalem, which had been divided for nineteen years, has been reunited under Israeli rule. But there is still much talk, and many people insist, that solution of the "Middle East Problem" will not be possible until Israeli Jews relinquish their "occupation" and restore the holy city -- or, at the very minimum, its eastern part -- to its "rightful owners", the Moslem Arabs.

What are the facts?

A city of many nationalities. Before the end of the 1967 Six-Day War, during which the Israeli Defense Forces reconquered Jerusalem from the Jordanians, claims to Jerusalem being a Moslem holy city were rarely, if ever, asserted. Jerusalem had always been a city in which many religions and nationalities lived side by side. It was only after the old city was back in Jewish hands that the Moslem Arabs declared their willingness to wage "jihad" (holy war) to bring the city back into Arab possession.

"Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, of Jewish yearning, and of Jewish thinking for over 3000 years. That is the reason that the State of Israel has rededicated the Jewish holy city to be its indivisible capital."

The notion to call Jerusalem an Islamic holy city has only come about in modern times, especially after the Arabs lost the city to Israel in the Six-Day War. It now has gained currency by dint of constant repetition. The basis for the claim is that Jerusalem does indeed contain an Islamic holy site, namely the Temple Mount (sacred to both Moslems and Jews) with its two mosques, El Aksa and the Dome of the Rock. It is the place from which Mohammed is believed to have ascended to heaven. Mohammed never set foot in Jerusalem. But aware that it was the holy city of Christians and Jews, and wishing to convert them to his new religion, he commanded his followers to build a mosque in Jerusalem. But never in Moslem history did this mosque compare in significance to the Moslem holy cities of Mecca and Medina -- cities that no "infidel" may visit.

A tenuous Moslem claim. It's on the basis of this religious tradition that the Moslems designated the entire Jewish Temple Mount to be their holy site. The Israeli Government, in its constant spirit of accommodation to Moslem sensibilities, has largely acceded to this tradition and has put the area in and around the two mosques entirely under Moslem control. But how would Christians feel if, instead of from the Temple Mount, Moslem tradition had Mohammed ascend from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and if the Moslem Arabs were to claim that site as their property? The Christian world, often ready to consent to Moslem claims against Jews and Israelis, would be greatly astonished and would certainly resist such claim. But Moslem Arab assertiveness doesn't end there. On the tenuous claim of their right to the Temple Mount, they have construed a claim to the entire city of Jerusalem (or at the very least to its eastern part), which they have declared to be their "third holiest city". And it would be an insult to all Moslems and all Arabs to leave *the city in the hands of the "infidel Jews".*

Jerusalem: Never an Arab capital. But the city of Jerusalem -- in contrast to Baghdad, Cairo, and Damascus -- has never played any major role in the political and religious lives of the Moslem Arabs. It was never a political center, never a national or even a provincial or subprovincial capital of any country since biblical times. It was the site of one Moslem holy place, but otherwise a backwater to the Arabs. The passion for Jerusalem was not discovered by the Moslem Arabs until most recent history.

At the center of Jewish life. Jerusalem has stood at the center of the Jewish people's national life since King David made it the capital of his kingdom in 1003 BCE. It remained the capital until the kingdom was conquered by the Babylonians 400 years later. After the return from Babylonian exile, Jerusalem again served as the capital of the Jewish people for the next five and a half centuries.

Jews are not the usurpers in Jerusalem. They have been living there since the Biblical era and have been the majority population since the 19th century. Jews have synagogues and other holy sites in most cities of the world. But do they claim sovereignty over those cities because of it? Of course not! *It would be preposterous and people wouldn't accept it. And the Moslem Arab claim to Jerusalem,* based on the mosques on the Temple Mount, is just as untenable. Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, of Jewish yearning, and of Jewish thinking for over 3000 years. That is the reason that the State of Israel has rededicated the Jewish holy city to be its indivisible capital.

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Serbia certainly was—is destructive of both human life and property. How anyone can call such a conflict "humanitarian" defies the imagination.

Mr. Wolfson states that liberal humanitarians are "temperamentally unsuited to the neo-imperial task of remaking an entire political culture" (like Kosovo). In fact, no one is suited to such a task. Outsiders cannot build nations; nor do they want to. A vice president of our local Reserve Officers Association, who deals on a daily basis with sending Army reservists to Bosnia, reports a mass exodus from the reserve forces upon their return. The Bosnia and Kosovo quagmires have been highly destructive of our armed forces.

ROBERT C. WHITTEN
Cupertino, California

TO THE EDITOR:

Adam Wolfson deals rather well with an issue of much importance to America's post-cold-war future. But even if the American public were to adopt Theodore Roosevelt's internationalist patriotism, as he urges, it is not about to accept the casualties necessary for realistic military engagement. That it can be educated to accept them is highly unlikely, unless it can be shown clearly that either national security or a specific national interest is at stake.

WILLIAM H. RIDDELL
Tampa, Florida

TO THE EDITOR:

Adam Wolfson makes many excellent points, but I wonder if he is correct when he says, "Finally, if the McCain phenomenon proved anything, it is that patriotism is not dead in America." McCain makes an ideal hero for the 1960's and 1970's crowd. Liberals can admire his endurance of torture without having to think that he actually may have killed some of the enemy (horror!). It is only permissible to admire a warrior today if we *lost* the war, and if he was punished by five-and-a-half years of terrible mistreatment.

DAVID C. STOLINSKY
Los Angeles, California

ADAM WOLFSON writes:

Marcel R. Schmorak's assertion that the primary purpose of the Kosovo war was to punish ethnic cleansing is hard to credit, given what those who actually planned and prosecuted the war said of their intentions. They claimed to be defending democracy, religious toleration, multiculturalism, and a new dawn in Europe. Even if that was just so much blather, and their only goal was to punish ethnic cleansing, they did a pretty poor job at that, too—fighting the war from the air alone while the Serbs did their worst on the ground. One way or another, it is hard to believe that so weak-willed an approach to international affairs will scare off future offenders. If anything, it advertises to the world our own timidity, military no less than ideological.

I thank Robert C. Whitten, William H. Riddell, and David C. Stolinsky for their insights. One of my points was that while America's liberal elites strongly supported the war in Kosovo, they saw no need to put their money where their mouths were. Certainly, they are not leaping to fill the army vacancies that Mr. Whitten reports have followed in the wake of Bosnia and Kosovo. One of the most important lessons to be learned from Theodore Roosevelt today is that only an informed and vibrant love of country can sustain America's leading role in the world—and properly define it. That is a lesson our liberal humanitarian hawks have yet to learn.

1948 & Beyond

TO THE EDITOR:

In his article, "Were the Palestinians Expelled?" [July-August], Efraim Karsh asks: "What exactly happened in

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Haifa? Was there 'an act of expulsion' as the Palestinians and Israeli 'new historians' have argued?" But Mr. Karsh does not cite a single "new historian" who claims that the Jews expelled the Arabs from Haifa. I hope that he is not thinking of Benny Morris, the leading student of this subject among the new historians. For Morris makes no such argument. In his book, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, Morris recounts the events in Haifa in late April 1948 not very differently from Mr. Karsh. He too makes it clear that the Jewish leadership in the city passionately importuned the Arabs not to leave. His narrative is, to be sure, more nuanced than Mr. Karsh's, and does make mention of Jews in Haifa who were not at all displeased to see the Arabs leave. But he does not accuse them of doing anything more than facilitating an exodus for which the Arabs themselves were primarily responsible.

Mr. Karsh writes that new documents at his disposal "make it possible to establish the truth about what happened in Haifa—and by extension, elsewhere in Palestine." But one can establish what happened elsewhere in Palestine, later in 1948, only by presenting the pertinent evidence, not by extrapolating from what happened in Haifa. Morris, who makes no claim that there was an expulsion from Haifa, presents evidence of subsequent Jewish expulsions of Arabs from other areas of Palestine, including Lydda and Ramle. Does Mr. Karsh now possess evidence that will confute what Morris and other new historians have written about what happened in these places?

ALLAN ARKUSH
Newton, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

Efraim Karsh convincingly details how the Arab leadership caused the Palestinian-Arab exodus from Haifa in 1948, and the impassioned campaign by the Jews to convince the Arabs to stay and persuade those who had already fled to return.

Nineteen years later, the Israelis launched a similar effort during the Six-Day war. After Israeli troops liberated the city of Hebron (the burial place of the biblical patriarchs and matriarchs), the Israeli government ordered them to let the defeated, fleeing Arabs return. This measure, in effect, rewarded the local Arabs for having massacred the Jews of Hebron in 1929 and 1936.

Mr. Karsh's article makes it clear that the seeds of the coming Israeli tragedy were sown in 1948 and reside deep in the soul of a people who substitute hopes for unpleasant realities.

GEORGE E. RUBIN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Efraim Karsh is to be congratulated for swimming upstream against the tide of post-1948 Jewish neuroses. The same decade in which the Palestinian Arabs left Israel saw countless millions uprooted in scores of other countries. Yet few if any are demanding compensation for Germans expelled from Czechoslovakia and Alsace, or for Hindus expelled from Pakistan. Then there were the over half-million Jews who fled for their lives from Arab countries. Even if Arab claims were indeed true, and Palestinians must be allowed to return and be compensated, then surely all refugees should be awarded the same right.

STEPHEN A. BERGER
Ramat Gan, Israel

EFRAIM KARSH writes:

Allan Arkush is concerned lest I wrongly fault the Israeli "new historian" Benny Morris for claiming "an act of expulsion" in Haifa. Let me set his mind at ease. The allegation was made by a fellow "new historian," Ilan Pappé of the University of Haifa, who has often outbid Morris in the refashioning of Israeli

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history in line with the Palestinian "narrative."

But this does not make Morris's own account of the Haifa episode, or for that matter of the Palestinian exodus during the 1947-48 war, any more accurate or "nuanced." Although Mr. Arkush is impressed by Morris's mention of "Jews in Haifa who were not at all displeased to see the Arabs leave," Morris provides no evidence whatsoever for the existence of such sentiments apart from ungrounded suppositions. And how could he? In Morris's interpretation, the pre- and post-state Jewish armed forces (Hagana and Tsahal) were the main culprits responsible for the Palestinian exodus. But Morris's failure to consult the archives of these two military organizations, which contain hundreds of thousands if not millions of relevant documents, deprives him not only of the ability to speak authoritatively on Jewish/Israeli intentions and activities but also of invaluable insights into the Palestinian/Arab side. Extensive files captured during the war include, in the case of Haifa alone, the complete protocols of the city's Arab National Committee; that committee's correspondence with the Arab Higher Committee, the effective "government" of the Palestinian Arabs; and the Arab League's operational plans for northern Palestine.

Mr. Arkush questions whether the Haifa episode was at all representative of "what happened elsewhere in Palestine" at the time. It was. As in Haifa, most of the Palestinians who fled their homes in 1947-48 acted out of fear, disorientation, disillusionment with both their own leadership and with pan-Arab authorities, and, above all, a lack of communal cohesion and of the willingness to subordinate personal interest to the general good. Many fled before war reached their doorstep, and many were also forced to leave at the behest of their own leaders and/or the Arab states. Had they not so dispersed, the Palestinians would have been able to remain in their places of residence—as was the case with those who stayed put.

Haifa was the largest and best known example of forced exodus. But several days earlier, thousands of Tiberias Arabs had been similarly ordered to leave or bullied into leaving by their leaders. In Jaffa, the largest Arab community of Mandatory Palestine, the municipality organized the transfer of thousands of residents by land and sea. Added to this were the scores of villages vacated at the orders of local Arab militias and/or the armies of the Arab states.

This is hardly to deny occasional expulsions of Palestinian Arabs by Israeli forces in the heat of battle (most notably from the town of Lydda—though not from Ramle as Mr. Arkush suggests). But these accounted for a small fraction of the total exodus, and were more than matched by the expulsion of the *entire* Jewish population from areas in Palestine assigned by the United Nations partition resolution to the prospective Arab state.

Stephen A. Berger is therefore correct to argue that the hundreds of thousands of Jews forced out of Arab states possess a right of restitution at least as sound as that of the Palestinians. The Palestinians, after all, were unsuccessful aggressors who harnessed the entire Arab world to their attempt to destroy a neighboring national community. By contrast, the Jewish communities of the Arab states were nothing but hapless victims. They perpetrated no violence against the Arab majority in their respective countries of residence, nor were they even involved in the Palestine war. Their only "sin" was to be Jewish—not even Zionist—in highly intolerant societies.

Talking Heads

TO THE EDITOR:

In his article, "Intellectuals—Public and Otherwise" [May 2000], Joseph Epstein focuses on a peculiar sort of American writer (though he does mention a European here and there)—typified by Dwight MacDonald and Robert Warshow—whom I would hardly classify as an intellectual at all. Most of those mentioned by Mr. Epstein were really journalists who trafficked in what might be called mandarin materials and performance, speaking mainly to a certain club or coterie.

While Mr. Epstein throws into his list of traditional intellectuals some very curious figures like James Baldwin, Mary McCarthy, and Max Beerbohm, he does not mention John Dewey, whose work had an important influence on education. He mentions Henry James (as a nonintellectual) but not his brother William, who was significant in shaping certain currents of American thought.

There is an (admittedly imperfect) distinction to be made between the journalist-intellectual, who argues from aperçus based on a selection of examples that confirm his argument, and a genuine scholar-intellectual, who handles a topic with formidable and disciplined intelligence drawn from a seriously wide and inclusive base of data. I would give Thomas Sowell as an example of the latter.

The most important aspect of Mr. Epstein's subject was missed altogether: the differences between American and European intellectual life, and how each has changed with the advent of mass education. Mr. Epstein may have bitten off more than anyone can chew outside the covers of a rather thick book, but even in a short discussion of the subject there are distinctions to be made.

HERB GREER
Manchester, England

TO THE EDITOR:

Joseph Epstein accurately portrays traditional intellectuals, but his attacks on the new public intellectuals seem rather baseless. Despite their tenured status, one cannot say of today's public intellectuals that they have rested on their laurels. No one asked Edward Said to write outside literature or Richard Rorty outside philosophy. They may be more specialists than belletrists, but we the public have benefited from those whom Mr. Epstein calls "publicity hounds." Unfortunately, the purpose of his taxonomy is not merely to distinguish but to accord a privileged position

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to the "traditional" form of intellectuality.

PEIJIN CHEN
Seattle, Washington

TO THE EDITOR:

In his stimulatingly provocative article, Joseph Epstein makes one significant omission in his list of intellectuals—Walter Lippmann. From his high perch as pundit-journalist par excellence during the tumultuous decades preceding, during, and following World War II, Lippmann dispensed his "wisdom" on the world's problems. And yet, despite being a Jew (although a self-hating one), he never wrote a word about the Nazi persecution of the Jews, and did nothing to encourage the admission of the war's refugees to the United States.

There have been, of course, intellectuals of courage; one thinks, for example, of Émile Zola and Václav Havel. But Mr. Epstein's conclusion that intellectuals (both traditional and public) are a fairly futile faction is essentially true. The paradigmatic portrait is given by Paul Johnson in *Intellectuals*:

> [Edmund] Wilson quoted with relish a vignette of Walter Lippmann in his big Washington house during a rainstorm, in full evening dress, holding out a small frying pan with which he was trying to contend with a veritable inundation from a leak in the ceiling—the perfect image of the intellectual coping impotently with crisis.

MILTON BIRNBAUM
American International College
Springfield, Massachusetts

JOSEPH EPSTEIN writes:

Herb Greer's complaint seems to be that I did not write the article he would have written. Should he one day get around to doing so, I hope I shall remember to send a letter to the editor of the magazine in which it appears, complaining that his is not the article I would have written.

Peijin Chen is more fortunate than I in having benefited from the writings of Edward Said and Richard Rorty in their capacity as publicity intellectuals. My own view is that they are merely academics pushing their political views, which is not at all my notion of an intellectual.

I thank Milton Birnbaum for reminding me about Walter Lippmann and greatly regret my having neglected to mention him. He was the first of the American public intellectuals, and none other has ever come close to wielding the same degree of influence.

Oddities

TO THE EDITOR:

May I comment on two matters in connection with the correspondence on Norman Podhoretz's "Learning from Isaiah" [Letters from Readers, September]?

First, the quip attributed to "an anti-Semitic wag": "How odd of God to choose the Jews." As Mr. Podhoretz writes, although often attributed to Hilaire Belloc it may instead have been composed by "another Englishman, William Norman Ewer." Others, however, have ascribed it with equal plausibility to H.N. Brailsford. Whether the line is really anti-Semitic may be questioned, as it seems to fall into the same bantering category as other English jibes at Scots, Welsh, Irish, and so forth. Nor is the "follow-up" reported by Daniel Bell (and corrected by Mr. Podhoretz) the only such riposte. My own favorite is: "O, no it's not/He knows what's what."

Second, on whether there was a "Palestine" at the time of Jesus. This term, used by Herodotus to designate the part of Syria once inhabited by the Philistines, does not appear in the New Testament. It was officially applied to Judea for the first time by the Romans in the 2nd century, after the suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt. Determining to rid the area of any Jewish associations, they renamed it Palestina.

BARUCH LEVI
Princeton, New Jersey

Correction

Due to a printer's error, the name of the Latvian insurer Drošiba was misspelled in Gabriel Schoenfeld's article, "Holocaust Reparations—A Growing Scandal," which appeared in the September COMMENTARY.

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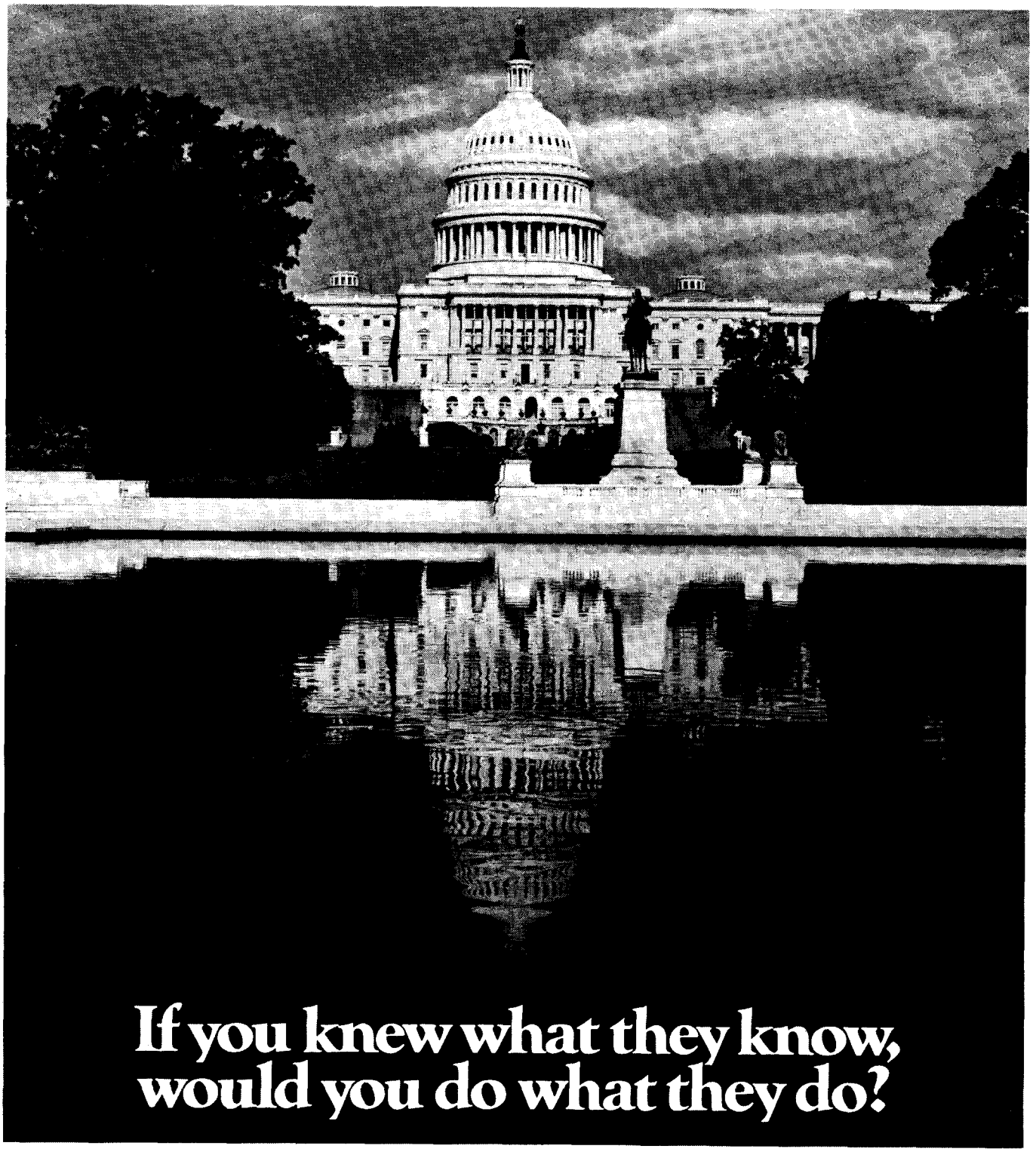

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Commentary
October 2000

Crash or Boom?

On the Future of the New Economy

Irwin M. Stelzer

For an economist these days, it is difficult even to attend a cocktail party without being asked whether we are, indeed, living in a new economy. (The next query—peculiar to New York—is "Where do you think the price of co-ops is headed?") Though the question may be posed for personal reasons, the answer one gives to it is far more consequential than whether bulls or bears will end up with the last laugh and the fattest IRA's.

Private gains or losses, however vital they may be to the individuals involved, and however interesting to the television channels that cover the markets around the clock, or the newsletters that combine financial analysis with "human interest" stories on the size of houses in Silicon Valley, are, in most instances, of no concern to public policy. But as Robert J. Shiller of Yale argues in his recent book, *Irrational Exuberance*,[1] in addressing the gyrations and, to some, astonishing levels of today's stock market we are not dealing merely with private winners and losers, but rather with "an important national—indeed international—issue":

> All of our plans for the future, as individuals and as a society, hinge on our perceived wealth, and plans can be thrown into disarray if much of that wealth evaporates tomorrow. The tendency for speculative bubbles to grow and then contract can make for very uneven distribution of wealth. It may even cause many of us, at times, to question the very viability of our capitalist and free-market institutions.

As the title of his book suggests, Shiller himself concludes that the current level of the stock market is, in fact, irrationally high, being the result of "wishful thinking on the part of investors" rather than of a "consistent estimation of real value." And that conclusion implies in turn that we are still living in the old, familiar economy—the one in which share values can become inflated by periodic outbreaks of speculative fervor and in which trouble, inevitably, lies in wait.

In this assessment, Shiller is hardly alone. Among the spate of new books on our current economic situation, there is no dearth of authors warning of "unfettered speculation,"[2] of a market fated to crash,[3] and of bubbles that will surely burst like past bubbles in the markets for tulips,[4] or Mississippi land,[5] or British trading rights in the South

Irwin M. Stelzer *is director of regulatory studies at the Hudson Institute and U.S. economic and political columnist for the* Sunday Times *of London. His recent contributions to* Commentary *include "Prosperity for All?" (June 1999).*

[1] Princeton University Press, 312 pp., $27.95.

[2] Edward Chancellor, *Devil Take the Hindmost: A History of Financial Speculation.* Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 386 pp., $25.00.

[3] John Steele Gordon, *The Great Game: The Emergence of Wall Street as a World Power, 1653-2000.* Simon & Schuster, 319 pp., $25.00.

[4] Mike Dash, *Tulipomania: The Story of the World's Most Coveted Flower & the Extraordinary Passions It Aroused.* Crown, 273 pp., $23.00.

[5] Janet Gleeson, *Millionaire: The Philanderer, Gambler, and Duelist Who Invented Modern Finance.* Simon & Schuster, 304 pp., $24.00.

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Seas.[6] Nor is Shiller alone in foreseeing not just a temporary setback in the financial markets but, as he puts it, "a poor long-run outlook for the stock market" in general.

Others, however, emphatically disagree, assuring us that the financial markets remain the best place to stash money for the long term[7] and that "Tomorrow, stock prices could immediately double, triple, or even quadruple and still not be too expensive."[8]

Shiller and those who think as he does are certainly right about one thing: if the bursting of speculative bubbles does involve more than a redistribution of income from losers to winners (which is not at all certain), and if (as Edward Chancellor argues in *Devil Take the Hindmost*) the ameliorative tools available to government are inadequate in a world of rapid currency movements, derivatives, and other relatively new trading instruments, then the implications are profound. To put it bluntly, investing Social Security funds in the stock market, a proposal now under lively debate, would then become a sure route to impoverishing the elderly. On the other hand, if history teaches us that "stocks hold the key to enriching the lives of all peoples everywhere" (Jeremy Siegel), and if the future of the stock market is buoyant (James Glassman and Kevin Hassett), then we most certainly should "save" Social Security by arranging for all of us to participate in what truly is a new economy.

ARE WE or are we not, then, living in that new economy? Unfortunately, the best answer to this question is Clintonesque in character: it depends on what the meaning of "new" is. Certainly there are companies that differ in their corporate style from what we have been accustomed to. And certainly there is a class of entrepreneurs who seem to differ from old-style executives in more than their taste for Dockers trousers—tending, for example, to be more suspicious of government intervention in economic affairs, more libertarian in their social outlook, greener in their positions on environmental issues, more likely to manage their own philanthropic activities, and less committed to either political party. But those who speak of a new economy have something much more sweeping in mind. For the investors among them, encouraged by thirty-something brokers, "new" means, essentially, financial markets in which share prices are certain to rise over the long term and in which temporary declines, even precipitous ones, are only so many "buying opportunities." For others, it means an economy so dynamic, with a Federal Reserve Board possessed of such powerful and finely calibrated instruments, that we need never again see a significant downturn. In short, "new" means an economy in which there is only one escalator, and it is marked "up."

In those particular senses of "new," it is safe to say that we are not living in a new economy. We have not seen our last hair-raising drop in stock prices, or what one author (Janet Gleeson) calls "terrifying vacillations in markets"—even if, at the moment, it seems to take more to stand investors' hair on end than it once did. The defanging of several Asian "tiger" economies, the sudden realization that the Mexican economy and its currency were shored up by unsustainable levels of debt, even the phrase "irrational exuberance" tumbling from the lips of Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Fed, have caused markets all over the world to drop like stones. (In the last of these cases, as Shiller records, the plunge spread from Wall Street to Japan, Hong Kong, and Germany; on the day after Greenspan's public musing, London's market followed suit.)

Nor have we seen our last recession. Businessmen will, from time to time, misestimate consumers' appetites for their goods and services, produce too much, and then, in the face of soaring inventories, contract output and cut back on investments and workforces. Government officials will commit errors—mistiming a change in tax rates, misreading a growth hiccup as a major slowdown, failing to raise interest rates before the inflation genie escapes the bottle, loading American companies with regulations whose costs outweigh the gains in efficiency from investment in new technologies, and so forth. And then there are such things as wars, oil-price shocks, and the like—in short, what British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan once famously said he feared more than anything else in the world: "events, dear boy, events."

It is true that we know better how to use the tools available to us in order to prevent a recession from cascading into a 1930's-style depression. In 1907, it took a private citizen, J.P. Morgan, to assume the role of a nonexistent central bank in order to stem financial panic. A few decades later,

[6] Peter M. Garber, *Famous First Bubbles: The Fundamentals of Early Manias*. MIT, 175 pp., $24.95.

[7] Jeremy J. Siegel, *Stocks for the Long Run: The Definitive Guide to Financial Market Returns and Long-Term Investment Strategies*. McGraw Hill, 1998 (second edition).

[8] James K. Glassman and Kevin A. Hassett, *Dow 36,000: The New Strategy for Profiting from the Coming Rise in the Stock Market*. Crown, 288 pp., $25.00.

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it took a major depression, and its mishandling by the Federal Reserve, before policy-makers learned what Walter Bagehot, the distinguished British economist, knew in 1873: "the best way for the bank or banks who have the custody of the bank reserve to deal with a drain arising from internal discredit is to lend freely."[9]

Today, Alan Greenspan has taught everyone just how effective a remedy that can be. When the U.S. stock market tanked in October 1987, and when, ten years later, the so-called Asian crisis seemed likely to roll over the world's economies, Greenspan brought matters to a swift resolution by easing the money supply—so swiftly in the latter case that he astonished even George Soros, the world's most famous currency speculator, who had seen in the Asian "crisis" a herald of the downfall of capitalism itself.[10]

Still, merely possessing antidepression and anti-bubble-bursting tools is not enough; one has to know how and when to use them. Although Greenspan manifestly does, there is more art than science in his management of monetary policy, and others have not been so successful. Nor will Greenspan, when he retires, have left us with a durable institutional arrangement to compensate for the loss of his special genius, which means that the risk of policy error continues—and *that* is nothing new.

BUT IF the "new economy" resembles the old economy in that we remain vulnerable to downturns both in financial markets and in the "real" economy, that is not the end of the story, or even its most important part. For there *are* many things about our present situation—five things in particular—that really do seem new. These developments began to take shape in the 1980's or a bit earlier, and each of them has to do with the structure of the American economy.

First, until Michael Milken came along, the ownership and the control of America's large corporations were two separate matters. For the managers, this was a cozy arrangement, giving them a tenure as secure, and as initiative-numbing, as that of any university professor. Rarely did the failure to maximize efficiency and innovation lead to even a threat of forced retirement.

All this changed when Milken found a way to finance the efforts of a class of entrepreneurs who had previously been denied access to long-term credit, and the rest, as they say, is history. Corpocrats who failed to increase the value of the enterprises they had been charged with running now found their companies taken over by Milken-financed predators who eliminated both them and the waste they had tolerated. Even more importantly, those same predators took a fresh approach to industries like television news (Ted Turner was an early Milken client) and communications (McGraw Cellular relied on Milken for its start).

Milken himself paid dearly for his assault on the corporate establishment. As John Steele Gordon puts it in *The Great Game*, he "came to ruin as a financier because he lacked J.P. Morgan's sense of limits and of the strength of the forces arrayed against him." But his legacy has been an enduring one: a leaner and meaner American corporate structure, focused on maximizing shareholder value by investing in efficiency-enhancing capital goods, shedding unnecessary layers of management, and welcoming rather than shunning innovation.

A second new element is the tax structure bequeathed to us by Ronald Reagan and only somewhat perverted by his successors. If investment and innovation require incentives, so does hard work. But high marginal tax rates—government appropriation of an undue portion of incremental profits and wages—act as a disincentive to both investment *and* work. By reducing those rates, Reagan increased the rewards of risk-taking and effort. In no small measure, the willingness of venture capitalists and Internet entrepreneurs to take the all-or-nothing chances associated with developing technologies can be attributed to Reagan's understanding of what is required to induce the gales of creative destruction that are so essential to the health of capitalism.

A third new feature is really an extension of an older one: greater reliance on competition and free markets to allocate resources among alternative uses. Jimmy Carter started, and Ronald Reagan finished, the deregulation of large swathes of the American economy: airlines, banks, electric utilities, gas companies, trucking, communications. Suddenly, airlines could fly to the destinations that they, rather than some federal regulator, felt would most appeal to travelers—and cut fares if they chose. Dynamic companies like Enron could create new markets in natural gas, bandwidth capacity, and a variety of energy and other products. Electric companies could begin to build smaller, lower-cost power plants in an effort to woo customers from rivals once protected against such raids by

[9] Bagehot's *Lombard Street: A Description of the Money Market* (1873) has recently been reissued. John Wiley, 1999.

[10] George Soros, *The Crisis of Global Capitalism*, Public Affairs (1998). In a forthcoming book, Soros reportedly admits he was wrong.

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their friendly government regulator. Truckers were given the freedom to fill their eighteen-wheelers on inbound as well as outbound trips, and to range over the entire country in pursuit of business.

This newly competitive system, it is important to add, has been actively protected by the Justice Department's (often unpopular) antitrust division. Thanks to this activism, which recently reached its apex in the Microsoft case, fledgling firms, and the investors to whom they look for venture capital, know that they will not be denied access to markets by a powerful company that can crush others by tying a competing product to one in which it already possesses monopoly power.

Fourth on the list is a new devotion to free trade. This is not to say that protectionism is dead: hard-pressed industries—steel, oil, textiles, and others—often ask for and sometimes get insulation from international rivals. But, by and large, trade is freer than it has ever been. This means that American consumers can count on foreign competition to keep the prices of cars, T-shirts, sneakers, clothing, and other goods at reasonable levels. And the fact that there are ample supplies of workers in the world to meet the needs of these consumers enables the American economy itself to continue expanding without triggering inflation. (Of course, foreign competition based on a "cheap" labor supply puts some American workers in a worse position to bargain for and receive higher wages: hence, their impulse to protectionism.)

Free trade, it must be remembered, is not confined to goods and services or the free movement of capital. It includes, as well, free movement of that other resource, labor. And there is no doubt that the world's workers are moving, sometimes legally, sometimes clandestinely, to where the opportunities are. For America, this means an augmented supply of labor to empty bedpans, build factories, and satisfy the demand for high-tech personnel.

Fifth, ownership. In 1952, a mere 4 percent of Americans owned stock. By 1997, 40 percent of American adults had some sort of ownership stake in the nation's corporations. Today, the Fed estimates that some 50 percent of Americans are shareholders.

These new capitalists are not all wealthy. Far from it: according to the Fed, the number of stock-owning families with annual incomes in the $25,000-$49,000 range has recently increased by 50 percent. (In the words of the *Wall Street Journal*'s Paul Gigot, "The workers of the world are uniting, but not the way Karl Marx imagined.") This suggests the formation of a much broader political constituency in favor of such market-oriented policies as reduced marginal tax rates and freer trade, which will in turn enhance the durability of the Milken-created revolution.

IN COMBINATION, these five factors make for a more flexible, more competitive, more innovative—and more productive—economy. And I have not yet mentioned what many would regard as the very heart of the new economy, namely, the revolution in information technology (IT).[11] This requires a separate discussion, but one that will take us back to the run-up in the financial markets and its connection, if any, with the "real" economy.

Don Listwin, the executive vice-president of Cisco Systems, an information-technology company whose growth rate can only be described as breathtaking, is one of many who argue that the Internet has repealed all the old rules on how we do business, dealing a card so high and wild (to paraphrase the balladeer Leonard Cohen) that we will never need to deal another. The old economy, Listwin recently told the *Wall Street Journal*, consisting of buildings and plants and trucks, was and remains vulnerable to such variables as interest rates and oil prices. New-economy companies that are "in the business of delivering intellectual property" are, by contrast, in a wholly different position. "[O]il and interest [rates] aren't on the radar screen. . . . If there's a slowdown, that isn't going to affect us—customers will just squeeze old-world assets even harder."

Is this true? Here once again we have acknowledged gurus taking opposite positions, with Jack Welch, the CEO of General Electric and possibly the most admired corporate executive in the country, stating flatly that "There is no new economy. It's the same old economy with new technology." Perhaps the best way to adjudicate the matter is to examine what is different about overall economic *performance* in recent years, and then to identify its proximate causes—apart, that is, from the influence of the five structural changes listed above.

The most obvious difference has to do with the behavior of the stock market—more precisely, with the relation of share prices to earnings. Simply put, investors are now willing to pay more for every dollar of earnings than ever before. Indeed, they are willing to lavish billions on companies, mostly in the IT sector, that have never shown a penny of profit and will not soon do so. The flip side of

[11] See also Francis Fukuyama's review of *Telecosm* by George Gilder on page 65 of this issue—ED.

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these new valuations is that the cost of raising capital has also come down. It is now easier and cheaper both for established companies and for startups to obtain equity capital, which in turn makes it easier and cheaper for these companies to invest in research and new technologies.

Not for long, however, according to Shiller and others of the "irrational-exuberance" persuasion. In a marked departure from the theory that markets rapidly process all available information, allowing investors to assign rational values to shares and other assets, a new school of thought, known as "behavioral finance," draws on what Shiller calls the "potent insights" of psychology, history, sociology, and demography to determine whether investors are indeed behaving rationally and hence whether markets are functioning efficiently. The answer: they are not. In the view of Andrei Shleifer, a leading academic member of this school who has written still another of the many books spawned by our period of unparalleled prosperity and intense interest in share prices, "Investors' deviations from the maxims of economic rationality turn out to be highly pervasive and systematic."[12] It follows that when reason is restored, and fundamentals reassert themselves, share prices will fall—a lot.

But the problem with this entire line of thinking is that its truth or falsity can only be judged after the fact (if then). Consider an investor who buys shares in loss-making Amazon.com because he accepts the premise that the costs of amassing a huge customer base will one day be justified by even larger sales of books, CD's, drugs, and other products. No analysis of Amazon's—or the market's—"fundamentals" would justify such a decision. But until we learn whether Amazon begins to turn fabulous profits or runs out of cash—two opposite scenarios now being predicted by different Wall Street analysts—we will not know whether this investor was behaving rationally or irrationally. And even if he loses his bet, that would not necessarily warrant characterizing his behavior as irrational—wrong, but not irrational.

The same goes for Internet stocks in general. I cannot say whether those gambling that current prices will rise are more likely to win their gamble than those, the so-called "shorts," who are gambling that prices will fall. Boyan Jovanovic and Peter Rousseau, two scholars of economic history, have reminded us recently in the *Wall Street Journal* that it might have seemed irrational to buy stock in the Radio Corporation of America at its 1929 price of $114 per share, a high to which it had risen from a low of $1.50 in 1920. But after crashing to $2.50 in 1932, RCA shares were eventually bought out by GE in 1986 at more than twice their "irrational" 1929 price. Other such examples abound.

We are left, then, with the limited conclusion that, thanks largely to the advent of IT, the prices of shares no longer bear the relationship to earnings that they once did. But this does not tell us whether we are experiencing a temporary aberration—"the combined effect of indifferent thinking by millions of people" (Shiller)—or a permanent lowering of the cost of capital in response to a major shift in how our economy works. To this latter possibility we may now turn.

IT WAS once thought that the "real" economy could grow at an annual rate of something like 2 percent without triggering inflation. If it grew faster than that, especially at a time when unemployment stood at 6 percent or lower, labor and industrial capacity would come into short supply, employers would bid up wage rates and other input costs, and inflation would take off. (Some economists have always quarreled with this analysis, but that is another matter.)

But data are beginning to suggest that just as share prices have broken out of their historic relationship to earnings, so the economy has proved able to produce more goods and services without running into inflationary bottlenecks. Productivity is now soaring, having increased from a rate of about 1.4 percent per year in 1974-1990 and a bit higher than that in 1990-1994, to 2.6 percent or higher for the years 1996-1999. Inflation is in check, even though unemployment is running at a mere 4 percent.

Of course, some would say that employers are wringing more output from an increasingly limited workforce during an up-phase of the business cycle; when the economy slows, the rate of increase in productivity will likewise recede. But the evidence supports an alternative interpretation—namely, that the economy's speed limit has *permanently* increased, and that growth of, say, 4 percent per year or even higher is attainable with an unemployment rate of under 4 percent, making it possible to give workers higher and higher wages without unleashing significant inflation. (In the twelve-month period ending this past June, hourly compensation rose by 4.7 percent but productivity rose even faster, by 5.2 percent, driving unit labor costs *down*.)

Once again, information technology plays a large (but not the only) part, for the massive investment

[12] *Inefficient Markets: An Introduction to Behavioral Finance*. Oxford, 224 pp., $60.00 cloth ($19.95 paper).

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in this technology has helped make the increase in productivity possible. IT helps companies purchase goods more efficiently by using the Internet to engage in business-to-business ("B2B") commerce. It lowers costs both to sellers and buyers by enabling a company like Enron to set up markets that allow the purchase of otherwise unused time on broadband communications systems, the National Transportation Exchange to connect buyers and sellers of unused trucking capacity, airlines to peddle otherwise empty seats to bargain-hunting travelers, and businesses in general to hold down inventories. And the effects may be spreading: according to a recent *Wall Street Journal* report, a new study by the economists Dale Jorgenson and Kevin Stiroh argues that improved productivity has come not just from the IT sector but from "noninformation-technology" industries as well; that the improvement is not due merely to cyclical factors; and that our higher-than-historic growth rates can be sustained.

AND YET, and yet. Acknowledging all these trends, I would still side with Lawrence Meyer, a governor of the Federal Reserve Board, in insisting that, however new certain aspects of our economy may be, we should not "encourage a disrespect for the old rules." Yes, productivity is increasing more rapidly than in the past. Yes, an unemployment rate consistent with low inflation is now around 4 rather than 6 percent. And yes, the economy seems able to grow more rapidly without triggering inflation. The old relationships have indeed shifted; but that does not mean they have disappeared.

Other things being equal, the more calories you consume, the fatter you get; but as you get older, it takes fewer calories to add more weight. So too with the economy. Increased productivity may make it possible for wages to rise faster than before without forcing employers to raise prices, but a relationship still exists among wages, labor costs, and consumer prices. We are certainly better off under the new set of relationships than we were before, but we would be wise to temper our enthusiasm with an awareness that the only thing that is permanent in economic affairs is the unattainability of perfection.

Long ago, John Maynard Keynes spoke of the importance of "animal spirits" in driving the economy. As his biographer Robert Skidelsky tells it,[13] Keynes believed that "the future yield of capital assets is incalculable, [and] . . . that had the capital equipment of the world depended on cool calculations of prospective yield, it would never have been built." Faced with inevitable uncertainty, entrepreneurs must rely on the virtues associated with enterprise—courage and recklessness being the most prominent among them. Thrift, wrote Keynes, "is not enough by itself to build cities or drain fens. . . . It is enterprise which builds and improves the world's possessions. . . . If enterprise is asleep, wealth decays."

This may provide a clue, and a way of drawing together the various strands of a maddeningly elusive subject. Perhaps because Ronald Reagan's tax reforms increased the rewards for risk-taking; perhaps because Michael Milken and his band of nonestablishment predators cleared away the corpocracy clogging the capitalist system; perhaps because, thanks to new technologies, we have somehow launched a cycle of rising productivity to finance still further innovations and still greater productivity; perhaps because besting our ideological enemies has bred in us a rush of confidence and swagger; *or* perhaps because we have been just plain lucky, we seem to have a new economy. If that is what you want to call it.

[13] "Two Stories of Investment," in *Financial Crises*, a series published in the UK by the Social Market Foundation, January 2000.

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The Moynihan Years

James Nuechterlein

APPROPRIATELY ENOUGH, the event that marked the beginning of the end of Daniel Patrick Moynihan's political career was a thoroughly ambiguous occasion. The date was July 8, 1999, the setting the Moynihan country home at Pindars Corners in upstate New York. The previous November, the senior Senator from New York had announced he would not run for a fifth term in 2000, and now Hillary Rodham Clinton had prevailed on Pat and Elizabeth Moynihan to let her use their farm to inaugurate the "listening tour" of the state that would eventuate, observers were already reasonably sure, in her own candidacy.

As a laying-on of hands, the event was at once predictable and peculiar: predictable in that Moynihan, a loyal if idiosyncratic party man, should have put his considerable popularity at the service of his putative successor, peculiar in that he and the woman he was so warmly endorsing had so edgy a relationship. For Moynihan had been, at best, openly skeptical of the health-care legislation that was the First Lady's particular project and the centerpiece of Bill Clinton's first-term program, and the Senator's recalcitrance had been not least among the factors that eventually scuttled the proposal. In the intervening years, relations between Moynihan and the administration had never been warm, and there was a good deal of sniping back and forth.

Beyond that, according to a new biography of Moynihan by Godfrey Hodgson,* social relations between the Clintons and the Moynihans were always less than intimate, with particular friction between the wives. On the eve of "the great Pindars Corners love-in," Hodgson reports, the Moynihans, annoyed with logistical demands from the Clinton entourage, had even threatened to call the whole thing off. But in the end, not uncharacteristically, Moynihan saw the political logic of the situation and acted accordingly.

MOYNIHAN'S HAS been, indeed, a curious career. Now seventy-three, he can look back on a lifetime of impressive success both as an intellectual—a raft of notable books and articles, a professorship at Harvard—and as a politician—a near quarter-century in the United States Senate, with four victorious campaigns in which his winning margins ranged between comfortable and overwhelming. Yet peers in both fields have given him mixed praise. No one has ever denied his intelligence, even brilliance, but a number of his academic colleagues have questioned the depth and rigor of his scholarship; and, for all his popularity with the voters of New York State, a number of senatorial colleagues will volunteer off the record that his

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* *The Gentleman from New York: Daniel Patrick Moynihan, A Biography*. Houghton Mifflin, 464 pp., $35.00.

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roster of legislative accomplishments is slight and his judgment eccentric. (To the question of whether Moynihan is brilliant or a crackpot, Hodgson reports the response of an anonymous Clinton staffer: "I have to choose?")

Nothing in Moynihan's career is more controversial than the erratic path he has followed ideologically. He broke into New York politics in 1954 as a campaign worker and, later, administrative aide to Averell Harriman, who served a single term as governor before losing to a Republican, Nelson Rockefeller, in 1958. The New York Democrats were then torn between the "bosses"—machine regulars—and the "reformers"—liberal purists eager to preserve and extend the legacy of the New Deal. Intellectually, Moynihan was with the reformers, but he was put off by the class bias he saw in their disdainful attitude toward the predominantly Irish- and Italian-Catholic bosses.*

It is thus not altogether surprising that, from the mid-60's to the mid-70's, Moynihan grew progressively disenchanted with the liberal Left and found himself most comfortable in the company of similarly disillusioned leftists who came to be known as neoconservatives (though at the time the great majority of them resisted the label). His narrow defeat of Bella Abzug in the Democratic primary for the Senate in 1976 was widely understood as a victory for party moderates and neocons over the liberal-left wing of the party. Yet not very long after winning the general election, and especially after Ronald Reagan's accession to the presidency in 1980, Moynihan drifted back, with an occasional gesture toward heresy, into the liberal mainstream of his party—a party that had made it increasingly clear that neocons were not welcome—and became a sad, sometimes bitter, disappointment to those who had at the outset most enthusiastically supported him. The candidate of the neoconservatives wound up a neoconventional Democrat.

All this makes for a fascinating and complicated tale, about which I will have more to say later on, and it is unfortunate that it has not found a better storyteller. Hodgson, a longtime British observer of American politics and a close friend of the Moynihans since the early 60's, is an unabashed fan of the Senator. "[T]here is," he tells us, "no one in political life in the United States, or anywhere else, whom on balance I admire more." There is of course nothing wrong with a biographer who thinks highly of his subject; nor is Hodgson incapable of (generally very mild) criticism of Moynihan. The problem is that, in consistently making the best case for him, Hodgson proceeds from his own political perspective, which is very much that of a traditional liberal. Insofar as he attributes the same perspective to Moynihan, this leads him frequently into tortured and slightly off-center analysis, and sometimes into downright silliness.

Consider, as just one example, the concluding sentences of the book, in which Hodgson writes that Moynihan will likely most be remembered

> as the man who—in the face of a generation that thought it had abolished the need for government—had the lucidity and the courage to restate the enduring propositions of the American political creed. That tradition holds many things, but above all a faith in the redemptive power of republican government.

This peroration is not merely hyperbolic, banal, and empty, it is simply wrong. Americans have always been unique in the West precisely for their *mis*trust of government, and even Moynihan, whose complex liberalism includes a belief, for certain purposes and on certain occasions, in activist government, would surely look askance at talk of its "redemptive power."

The book is a disappointment on other grounds as well. Its great strength is the access the author enjoyed to Moynihan and his family, to his public and private papers, and to dozens of friends and associates over the years. *The Gentleman from New York* is widely, if not deeply, researched, and it contains a wealth of fascinating information—even if, concerning a number of critical turning points, Moynihan was apparently not as forthcoming as might have been hoped. But the information is not often put to good use, and the coverage of Moynihan's career, the Senate years in particular, is frequently thin. Moreover, the book is awkwardly and confusingly organized and lazily written. It is marred by indeterminate chronology, anecdotes whose point or relevance is unclear, and narrative passages where the reader cannot quite be certain what is going on.

Still, it is what we have, and interested readers can use its mine of information to attempt to make sense for themselves of one of the most dazzling, frustrating, and enigmatic political figures of the past half-century.

THE FACTS of Pat Moynihan's extraordinarily public and often very noisy life are better known than those of virtually any other contempo-

* The first of Moynihan's many appearances in COMMENTARY was with an article entitled "'Bosses' and 'Reformers'—A Profile of the New York Democrats" (June 1961).

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rary politician who has not been nominated for President. His career began in obscurity, though not so great an obscurity as is sometimes supposed. Moynihan was not, contrary to legend, born or raised in Manhattan's Hell's Kitchen, and his childhood was not, for the most part, poverty-stricken. The central fact of his early life was not deprivation but instability. His father, a heavy drinker, walked out permanently when Moynihan was ten, and both before and after that the family was constantly on the move, its economic situation fluctuating frequently and unpredictably. No less chaotic was his educational experience: he attended a variety of grade schools, two high schools, and three colleges (CCNY, Middlebury, and Tufts). It is, indeed, easy to suppose that the psychological origins of Moynihan's later preoccupation with the fragility and instability of the political order lay in the unsettled and uncertain conditions of his upbringing.

Following graduation from college in 1948 and two years of graduate study at the Fletcher School at Tufts (where he eventually earned his Ph.D. in international relations), Moynihan spent three years in England studying—with, according to Hodgson, something less than intense rigor—at the London School of Economics. The career he launched on his return to the U.S. in 1953 alternated fitfully between politics and academia. After his four years with Governor Harriman, his pre-Senate experience consisted of teaching stints at Syracuse, Wesleyan, and Harvard interrupted by service in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations (1961-65), a failed race for New York City Council president in 1965, two years (1969-70) in the Nixon White House, two years as U.S. ambassador to India (1973-74), and eight months as Gerald Ford's ambassador to the United Nations (1975-76). Moynihan loved the world of ideas—he regularly insisted that nothing meant more to him than being a Harvard professor—but the ease with which he was so often lured away from Cambridge demonstrates an at least equal love for the political spotlight and political power.

Everywhere Moynihan went, controversy followed. His first—and perhaps most spectacular—experience of notoriety arose over the paper he wrote for President Lyndon B. Johnson in early 1965 while serving in the normally obscure position of Assistant Secretary of Labor. The essay, later known as the Moynihan Report, was titled *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. In it, Moynihan marshaled the ominous facts that signaled a crisis in the black family. He rehearsed the familiar story of the negative effects of slavery and discrimination on black employment rates and family stability. But—and this was *not* familiar—he presented additional statistics indicating that the pathology of the black family had taken on a life of its own. Up until 1960, Moynihan noted, unemployment rates and welfare rates had risen and fallen together. But in the early 60's, welfare rates—along with crime, illegitimacy, and single-parent households—shot upward even as black male unemployment declined significantly.

Moynihan's argument alerted the nation to the emerging phenomenon of what would later become known as the black underclass. Although the report included no policy recommendations, Moynihan supplemented it with memos to Johnson urging jobs programs with the government as employer of last resort and a family-assistance plan to supplement earned income. The report also supplied the framework for the President's historic speech at Howard University in June 1965, where Johnson argued that while black Americans had made great strides toward freedom, freedom was not by itself sufficient. "We seek," said Johnson, "not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and as a result," and he concluded with a call for a White House conference to explore ways to secure this equality.

BUT IN the aftermath of the Howard speech, black civil-rights leaders and their white allies on the Left turned on the Moynihan Report, and its author, with a vengeance. Black spokesmen were unhappy with the suggestion that their community was in any way responsible for its own problems. To focus on family instability, they insisted, was to divert attention from the real menace: white racism, and its manifestations in job discrimination, lax civil-rights enforcement, and an inadequate national commitment to eradicate poverty. Moynihan's report, his critics charged, was misguided in its history, its statistics, and its implications, and Moynihan himself was "blaming the victim." In the face of the outcry, the administration retreated with alacrity, and at the White House conference that fall the only significant reference to the black family was an attack on the (unnamed) report that had helped inspire the Howard University initiative just a few months earlier.

Moynihan was by then out of government and back in academia.* He had been seared by the experience and it set off a process of rethinking that

* His reflections on this entire episode are contained in "The President & the Negro: The Moment Lost," COMMENTARY, February 1967.

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led him for the first time seriously to question the liberal assumptions that he—along with virtually the entire post-New Deal American intellectual elite—had taken as self-evident. Although he did not move sharply to the Right, he did reject the utopian and sentimental radicalism of the liberal Left, identifying himself instead with the thinkers (including Irving Kristol, Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, Seymour Martin Lipset, and James Q. Wilson) who were involved in the launching of the quarterly *Public Interest* in the fall of 1965. (He had already coauthored *Beyond the Melting Pot*, an important study of ethnicity, with Glazer in 1963.)

All these men thought of themselves as social scientists, but they were less ready than most of their colleagues to see in social science the vehicle for an untroubled fulfillment of progressive aspirations. In Moynihan's case, his newly tempered liberalism also coincided comfortably with a streak of Irish melancholy in his character, and especially with the intuition that life, after all, is infinitely complicated and arbitrary and—as he had remarked at the death of John F. Kennedy—will occasionally break your heart.

His distancing from conventional liberalism continued with the appearance of James S. Coleman's 1966 study on education. Liberals had long assumed that economic inequality between blacks and whites had to do in significant part with unequal access to educational opportunities, which in turn determined life outcomes. Equalize those opportunities through governmental intervention—i.e., by spending more money on minority education—and economic disparities between the races would decline proportionately. The Coleman Report challenged all that. It showed, first, that the supposedly great divide in educational resources available to blacks and whites did not exist. Beyond that, it demonstrated that, of all the factors affecting student achievement, the most important was not levels of spending or curricular arrangements but family background.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the impact of the Coleman Report, about which Moynihan promptly organized a Harvard faculty symposium. As with the Moynihan Report, critics attacked both Coleman's data and his motives, but for those open to the evidence, reading it was a stunning experience. For the report undermined left-wing assumptions not just about race but about politics in general. If government attempts to equalize educational achievement were as ineffectual as Coleman indicated, what might that suggest about the ability of public policy in general to bring about desired social outcomes?

BY THE late 1960's, Moynihan was convinced that liberalism had taken the nation to the brink of disaster. Protests against the Vietnam war—a war, Moynihan noted, of "liberal anti-Communism"—had escalated into ever more violent confrontations on college campuses and into widespread alienation among the nation's allegedly best and brightest from the basic institutions and values of American society. In domestic policy, a war on poverty and a succession of civil-rights bills had left a legacy of destructive and terrifying summer riots in the nation's cities.

By 1967, Moynihan was advising his fellow liberals (he never entirely stopped thinking of himself as one) to seek a "politics of stability." To that end, he told the members of Americans for Democratic Action, liberals should rid themselves of the illusion that the nation—especially its cities—could effectively be run from Washington. They should also, he said, "overcome the curious condescension that takes the form of defending and explaining away anything, however outrageous, which Negroes, individually or collectively, might do." Finally, he suggested, they "must seek out and make much more effective alliances with political conservatives."

And he was prepared to act on his own advice. Prior to the 1968 presidential election, Moynihan put out a discreet feeler to Richard Nixon, and, after Nixon defeated Hubert Humphrey in November, he accepted the new President's offer to serve as domestic counselor. The move surprised and appalled Moynihan's Harvard colleagues (as well as, Hodgson implies without explicitly saying so, his wife), and he was widely suspected of opportunism. But although Moynihan has never been lacking in ambition, or in the careful cultivation of those who might further his career, going to work for Nixon made a good deal of political and ideological sense. The Democratic party, in Moynihan's view, was currently so in thrall to radicals black and white that it was incapable of effective governance. More positively, Nixon seemed to Moynihan the sort of enlightened conservative open to unfamiliar ideas. His administration could be, he hoped, one of "Tory men and Whig measures."

Most particularly, Nixon was willing to take fresh initiatives in the interrelated areas of welfare, race, and poverty. Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty, Moynihan concluded, had failed because it depended on a bewildering and vastly inefficient complex of bureaucratic structures, whose fecklessness was compounded by the requirement that anti-poverty programs include the "maximum feasible participation" of the poor—which reduced in practice to the intimidating theatrics of black radical

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"community organizing," or, as Tom Wolfe memorably put it, "mau-mauing the flak-catchers." What the poor needed, Moynihan persuaded Nixon, was not more programs but money.

Nixon, accordingly, made the Family Assistance Plan (FAP) the heart of his first-term domestic program. Under FAP, which included work incentives, the existing welfare system would be scrapped and families would instead receive supplements to their income sufficient to raise them above the poverty line. In the end, a coalition of conservatives and leftists defeated the program—the former because it was too radical, the latter because it was not radical enough. Although Hodgson attempts to saddle Nixon with much of the blame—for never having given the plan his unqualified support—Moynihan, in a view that he has not changed since, spoke highly of the President and placed most of the blame on the liberals.

His fissure with the Left deepened in the Nixon years not only over FAP but over a curious reprise of the Moynihan Report furor. In January 1970, Moynihan prepared for the President "a general assessment of the position of Negroes." Objectively considered, he said, blacks in America had made great economic and social progress, despite continuing unfavorable trends in crime and family instability. But radical rhetoric among groups like the Black Panthers and their white sympathizers had obscured much of that progress. "The time may have come," Moynihan advised,

> when the issue of race could benefit from a period of "benign neglect." The subject has been too much talked about. The forum has been too much taken over [by] hysterics, paranoids, and boodlers on all sides. We may need a period in which Negro progress continues and racial rhetoric fades.

Someone leaked the memo to the *New York Times*, and the Left, willfully ignoring the sympathetic context in which the phrase "benign neglect" occurred, seized on it as evidence of the (at best) callous indifference toward blacks of the Nixon administration in general and of Moynihan in particular. As had been the case five years earlier, Moynihan was hurt and outraged by the manifestly unfair accusations of racism. Unlike in the earlier case, an administration unburdened by dependence on blacks or the Left offered him its full support.

When Moynihan left the Nixon White House toward the end of 1970—his strict two-year leave of absence from Harvard was coming to an end—he did so on continuing good terms with the President. Indeed, following Nixon's reelection in 1972, he accepted an offer to become ambassador to India. By now, the Watergate scandal was coming to a boil, but Moynihan, rather than strategically distancing himself from Nixon, wrote to the President in late March 1973 declaring his "unshaken loyalty" and offering to return to the White House—an offer that Nixon, no doubt fortunately for Moynihan, did not take up. Even so, Moynihan arranged a visit to the western White House in San Clemente three months later, following which he concluded, as he confided to a friend, "I belonged with this crowd."

During the Nixon years, Moynihan had aligned himself ever more closely with the neoconservative community, and in particular with Norman Podhoretz, the editor of Commentary. Toward the end of his relatively uneventful service in India, he took up Podhoretz's suggestion that he write about America's increasingly isolated situation at the United Nations. The result, published in Commentary in March 1975, was "The United States in Opposition." In this essay, Moynihan argued that the UN had come largely under the influence of a collectivist Third World ideology, much of it picked up by members of colonial elites who had been educated in England, where they absorbed the socialist beliefs of British academics. That ideology—against which much of the West now found itself unwilling or unable to contend—championed redistribution over production and equality over liberty, and had a pronounced anti-American flavor. It was time, Moynihan concluded, for the U.S. to "go into opposition" at the UN, time indeed "that the American spokesman [should come] to be feared in international forums for the truths he might tell."

Moynihan would never write anything more directly influential. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger read the article immediately, brought it to the attention of President Gerald Ford, and by May 1975 Moynihan was ensconced as ambassador to the United Nations, practicing what his essay had proposed. In his stormy eight months at the UN, Moynihan pursued a strategy (not always, he thought, with the full support of Kissinger and the State Department) of aggressively defending American ideals and interests and, in relations with other countries, rewarding the nation's friends and punishing its enemies.

One issue in particular defined Moynihan's UN stewardship. Over the years, as he observed, there had been no better friend of the U.S. in the UN

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than Israel. And so, in 1975, to the resolution introduced by Arab nations and supported by the Soviet bloc condemning Zionism as a form of racism, he responded with outraged fury. Although he could not muster the votes to defeat the resolution, he denounced it in an eloquent and widely noticed speech that began and ended with a defiant sentence provided him by Podhoretz: "The United States rises to declare before the General Assembly of the UN, and before the world, that it does not acknowledge, it will never abide by, it will never acquiesce in this infamous act."

The stint at the UN brought Moynihan renewed notoriety, but this time of a mostly favorable kind, and he used it as a springboard, declaring his candidacy for the U.S. Senate in June 1976. The Republican-Conservative incumbent, James L. Buckley, was considered vulnerable, but Moynihan faced formidable opposition in the September Democratic primary from Congresswoman Abzug, Paul O'Dwyer, and Ramsey Clark. Abzug was the favorite, and to this day many observers believe it was only the last-minute endorsement of Moynihan by the *New York Times* that allowed him to eke out a victory. He went on to defeat Buckley by a comfortable margin in November.

He was, though without affirming the label, the neoconservative candidate—a fact that was reflected both in the people who staffed his campaign and in those he brought with him to Washington. His closest associates were involved in the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM), an organization whose de-facto hero was Senator Henry M. ("Scoop") Jackson of Washington State and that hoped (in shorthand terms) to de-McGovernize the Democrats. After the defeat of Jackson in his second bid for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1976, the CDM people saw Moynihan as their paladin, and were soon urging him to mount a primary challenge in 1980 to the ineffectual President Jimmy Carter. But it was not to be. Moynihan not only declined to challenge Carter—he rightly saw this as a hopeless enterprise—but became, in the aftermath of Ronald Reagan's victory in 1980, a more or less standard liberal Democratic Senator whose politics his erstwhile enthusiasts found difficult to explain. Whatever happened, they wondered in dismay, to Pat Moynihan?

WHAT HAPPENED was political reality. Moynihan had won nomination only because the liberal vote in the predominantly liberal New York Democratic electorate had been split three ways. He felt himself hostage to the good opinion of the *New York Times*, which had supported him in 1976 only after a heated internal struggle. He feared a primary challenge from the Left in 1982. As for his neoconservative friends, they were of little political use to him. CDM had made almost no inroads in pushing the Democrats toward the Center, or in making them hospitable toward neoconservatives.

And then there was the neocons' attitude toward Ronald Reagan. Prior to Reagan's nomination in 1980, many if not most of them had considered him an ultraconservative lightweight; but once he was nominated, and especially once he was elected, Reagan quickly won over most neoconservatives, who were anyway drifting away from the Democratic party. (Three members of Moynihan's early Senate staff, Elliott Abrams, Chester E. Finn, Jr., and Charles Horner, eventually joined the Reagan administration.)

It is hardly surprising, in retrospect, that Moynihan declined to follow the neocons. Were he to do so, he knew, the New York state Democratic party would disown him. It must have seemed that to act as his neoconservative friends urged him to do would be to guarantee a future as a one-term Senator. But he had other things in mind. As he stated in declining to run against Carter, "I have absolutely no interest in the presidency. I'd like to stay in the Senate long enough to have some consequence. What I'd really like to do, if I could, would be to serve four terms." And he proceeded to do what that ambition demanded.

This is not to suggest that he operated only out of political calculation. Moynihan had always been a fierce instinctive Democrat, and had never considered changing his party affiliation, even during his tenure in the Nixon White House. And whatever his flirtations with the Right, he never entirely lost faith in activist government and he certainly never supposed, as Reagan did, that government was the enemy. From very early on, he concluded that the large Reagan tax cuts—and the anticipated budget deficits resulting from them—were consciously intended to put a stranglehold on spending for domestic programs.

Ronald Reagan was, in any case, the most polarizing political figure of the last half-century, one about whom few people remained neutral. At whatever moment Moynihan decided he could not be a Reagan Democrat, he therefore became, willy-nilly, an anti-Reagan Democrat. Even as the political dynamics of the post-1980 situation drew most neoconservatives to the Right, they drew Moynihan, situated differently, in the opposite direction.

The decision to take on the Reagan administra-

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tion solved his political problem. By 1982 he was invulnerable to attack from the Left, and from then until he had fulfilled his four-term ambition, he won renomination and reelection without significant opposition. As for the neoconservatives, what the Senator is quoted in this book as saying of his once close friendship with Norman Podhoretz and his wife Midge Decter could stand for his changing relationship with the neocons in general: "We didn't split up. We drifted apart."

Post-1982, Moynihan's career in the Senate is largely anticlimactic, at least in terms of ideological analysis, and need not be dwelt on in detail.

On domestic issues, he generally voted, Hodgson notes, as a "New Deal Democrat." From his progressively senior position on the Senate finance committee, he was particularly effective at securing for his New York constituents their fair share, and more, of government spending, and even those otherwise critical of his legislative record concede his skill at advancing his state's interests. He worked to reform the tax system, especially for those with low incomes, and to keep the social-security system solvent. He wanted health-care reform, but not the Clintons' comprehensive program. He vigorously opposed the line-item veto. After some early waffling, he opposed the attempt to impeach and convict President Clinton. He had, until his opposition to partial-birth abortion, an unblemished pro-choice record. (As a Catholic, he said, he considered abortion a sin, but he thought it a matter women would have to work out for themselves.)

Two items in Hodgson's account suggest Moynihan's limits as a legislator. The first is what the author holds up as perhaps Moynihan's "most accomplished legislative achievement": the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991. It is not, one feels safe in saying, one of the landmark pieces of legislation in our time, and readers are likely to finish Hodgson's summary unpersuaded of its significance if not baffled as to its content.

Then there is welfare reform, which had always been Moynihan's signature issue and yet on which, as Hodgson concedes, he wound up "all but isolated." He fought the welfare-reform act of 1996, which abolished the federal guarantee of cash assistance, largely on the grounds that welfare recipients were "in enormous proportion . . . essentially failed persons"—a condescension unusual for, and unworthy of, him. Perhaps more tellingly, his opposition was colored by a peculiar, and ever more indulgently sentimental, indignation:

> Just how many millions of infants we will put to the sword is not yet clear. . . . Those involved will take this disgrace to the grave. The children alone are innocent. . . . I don't want to sound apocalyptic, but the effect on New York City would be something approaching an Apocalypse. . . . [J]ust you wait until there are a third of a million children in the streets. That's what you are talking about—children on grates. . . . Our only hope is to save the children.

Then there were the issues of foreign policy and national security, issues on which, in political terms, it probably would have been easier for Moynihan to stick with his neoconservative friends. Here too, however, he moved Left. He continued to share the contempt for Communism central to neoconservatism, but, having decided that the USSR was a declining power, he opposed much of the Reagan defense program. And although he would never have thought of himself as a dove in foreign policy, that is how, more often than not, he voted in the Senate. He disapproved of CIA covert-action programs in Central America and opposed efforts to undermine the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, at one point temporarily resigning in pique as vice chairman of the Senate intelligence committee. (Moynihan later concluded that the CIA should be abolished.) He came out against the invasion of Grenada in 1983 on the grounds that it violated international law, the scrupulous defense of which became for him an issue that took priority over national-security concerns. As Hodgson approvingly notes, Moynihan had moved some distance away from "orthodox anti-Communism." By the time he voted against the Gulf war in 1991, he seemed considerably removed in spirit from the man who had written "The United States in Opposition" and who had championed American interests so vigorously at the UN.

In the twilight of his career, tributes to Moynihan roll in (including, in early August, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, our nation's highest civilian honor). The senior Senator has become, in Hodgson's words, "a legend, a monument, a Grand Old Man." Even his most severe critics acknowledge his astonishing intellectual range, his enormous, catholic curiosity about and polymathic knowledge of all manner of things. His voluminous writings have touched on, among other subjects, traffic safety, drugs, architecture, race, welfare, social security, international law, diplomacy, ethnicity, urban affairs, government secrecy, social deviance, crime, and education. Those writings demonstrate a mind that,

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while often inconsistent, is almost never uninteresting.

As a Senator, Moynihan has taken evident pleasure and satisfaction in living what is, as a former neoconservative aide put it, "a pretty damn good life." A quarter-century in the Senate might itself be considered the best revenge for the manifold slights he endured earlier in his career. He has been a significant intellectual and oratorical presence among his colleagues, and even those who disparage his legislative accomplishments have basked in the reflected glory his reputation as a scholar brings to the body.

Yet it is not clear what Moynihan's years in the Senate finally add up to. As a legislator, he has been, while more dutiful to his party than not, essentially unclubbable, and he has operated for the most part as an independent agent. Moynihan's Senate career brings to mind the irritation expressed by a prominent New Dealer concerning certain eccentric progressive senators of his day who insisted, above all else, on their independence. "They cannot lead," he complained, "and they will not follow."

TO CONTEMPORARIES and historians alike, the great controversy over Moynihan will always involve his ideological peregrinations. His defenders, like Hodgson, think that Moynihan finally "came home" to the liberalism that was always his natural place of residence and from which he had strayed only under extraordinary circumstances. The more gentle of his neoconservative critics conclude with resignation that as a Senator he followed, perhaps understandably, the path of least resistance. The still embittered among them say bluntly that he sold out. Moynihan himself insists that he stayed essentially stationary as the political spectrum shifted around him.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to sort this out definitively. But consider a thought experiment. Suppose that, in 1976, Moynihan had lost the Democratic primary rather than narrowly winning it, and had thereupon returned permanently to academic life. Where then would he finally have found his ideological home? The conclusion seems inescapable that he would have continued to develop as one of the most powerful critics of the liberal Left on the contemporary American scene, an eloquent and consistent champion of neoconservative-style reform, and one of the most truly influential voices of the age. One wonders if, in moments of reflection, Daniel Patrick Moynihan himself ever contemplates such a counter-scenario.

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Writing Jewish

Hillel Halkin

In his 1913 essay "The Hebrew Book," the prominent Hebrew poet and literary figure Chaim Nachman Bialik elaborated on an idea that had been preoccupying him for several years. Termed by him *kinus*, literally a "gathering" or "bringing together," this was to select, edit, and publish in attractively affordable editions a large number of classical, nonsacred Jewish texts hitherto inaccessible to the general reader. The project was ambitious because, unlike the sacred component of Jewish literature, which had always circulated widely, much of the material Bialik was thinking of (ancient religious poetry, medieval prose romances, medieval and postmedieval Hebrew verse, works of Jewish philosophy, and so forth) was out of print or had never been in it.

Bialik conceived of this undertaking, which today we would call establishing and promulgating a secular Jewish canon, as part of the cultural program of Zionism, a national effort to recover a Jewish literary tradition that, far from having been restricted to the religious sphere alone, had embraced the full range of human experience. In setting forth a practical proposal for *kinus*, he divided the texts in question into seven categories: the apocryphal books of the Bible, the medieval corpus of Judeo-Arabic literature, writing in modern Jewish vernaculars like Yiddish, and so on. Concerning the sixth of these categories, which he described as "[modern] works of a universal nature written by Jewish writers in non-Jewish languages," Bialik observed:

> For the moment, I propose that [this] category be omitted, since its inclusion in the project of *kinus* is premature. This is not because it lacks national importance—on the contrary!—but because of the special problems it involves.

Bialik did not dwell on these "problems," even though they may not have been obvious to his readers, who in 1913 could have named but a few of the prominent "Jewish writers of a universal nature in non-Jewish languages" familiar to us today. There was, of course, the seminal case of Spinoza. And Heine, if one overlooked or forgave his conversion to Christianity. Likewise, Disraeli. And a small number of contemporary Jewish authors writing for predominantly non-Jewish audiences, including Lev Shestov in Russian, Max Nordau and Arthur Schnitzler in German, and Ferenc Molnar in Hungarian. Perhaps a handful of Bialik's readers had even heard of such new talents as the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam or the half-Jewish Marcel Proust, the first volume of whose *Remembrance of Things Past* appeared in the same year as Bialik's essay. But it would have taken a degree of prescience even then to foresee that this still thin trickle of Jewish literary talent into the languages of Europe was about to become a major deluge.

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FRANZ KAFKA, Italo Svevo, Isaac Babel, Elias Canetti, Albert Cohen, Joseph Roth, Julian Tuwim, Antoni Slonimski, Ilya Ehrenburg, Elsa Lasker-Schüler, Hermann Broch, Bruno Schulz, Walter Benjamin, Nelli Sachs, Paul Celan, Primo Levi, Vasily Grossman, Saul Bellow, Nadine Gordimer, Joseph Brodsky, Philip Roth: even a partial list of major Jewish writers of our times amply illustrates the problems Bialik had in mind. Some of these authors were born to two Jewish parents, some to one, some to parents baptized before their birth. Some converted to Christianity themselves. Some were raised as Jews and others were not. Some dealt explicitly with Jewish themes in their writing, some inferentially, some to all appearances not at all. Some felt comfortable with their Jewishness. Some did not. Some were ambivalent or indifferent.

Moreover, although these distinctions sometimes form consistent patterns—a strong Jewish identity, for instance, often goes together with clear Jewish concerns in the work—this is not always the case. Kafka, intensely involved with being a Jew, never used the word in his fiction, whereas Proust made Jews into key characters in his seven-volume masterpiece while never coming forth as one himself. Slonimsky, born a Polish Catholic to converted parents, came to value a Jewish heritage that Joseph Roth, raised in a Galician shtetl, repudiated. Primo Levi, sent to Auschwitz as a Jew, appears to have considered his Jewishness as a fact of life that was to be neither regretted nor overly valued.

Who of these writers belongs in a Jewish canon? Bialik's reluctance to enter such a conceptual thicket is understandable.

And not only Bialik's. The subject continued to be shied away from long after him. In the United States, as Ruth Wisse points out in her important new book, *The Modern Jewish Canon*,* the notion of a multilingual corpus of 20th-century writing usefully considered Jewish was still regarded as outlandish even when she was a graduate student at Columbia in the 1960's. Books, articles, and academic courses on a modern Hebrew or Yiddish literature that transcended national boundaries, yes: such disciplines were no different from English, Spanish, or German literature, which were likewise not confined to a single country. But a modern *Jewish* literature, defined neither by the religious beliefs, nationality, nor language of its authors but by a nebulous assumption of secular Jewish character or peoplehood (which many of these authors would have rejected), hardly seemed a serious proposition.

Even at the height of acclaim in the 1960's and early 70's for the "American Jewish fictional renaissance," when writers like Bellow, Roth, Bernard Malamud, and others were being freshly hailed for their contribution to American culture, it was that culture to which they were seen, and saw themselves, as belonging—a judgment acceded to by an American Jewry that often tended to view them less as an asset than as a threat to its carefully nurtured image. In Europe, countries struggling to disown a legacy of totalitarianism and anti-Semitism were even more anxious to claim leading Jewish writers as their own. A Kafka, Babel, or Schulz (Babel murdered by the Communists, Schulz by the Nazis) was a monument to a "different" Germany, Russia, or Poland only if his achievements could be attributed to a native culture.

In Israel, where Bialik's project of *kinus*, though never systematically implemented, was carried out ad hoc on a book-by-book basis, the situation was similar for different reasons. Though secular Jewish peoplehood was a Zionist axiom, its literary expression was taken to be Hebrew, the "national language" of the Jews. It was thus only, or at least predominantly, in Hebrew that Jewish literature was to be sought. Works written in other languages were either a tragic miscalculation—as was the case with Yiddish literature, many of whose authors had known Hebrew well and even started their careers in it before switching to the doomed East-European Jewish vernacular—or a consequence of Jewish cultural unraveling in modern times, as was the case with writers who, deprived of a traditional Jewish education, never had Hebrew as an option. And although the Sholom Aleichems and I.L. Peretzes could be regained for high Jewish culture by translation from the "low" medium of Yiddish into Hebrew (just as Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* or Yehuda Halevi's *Kuzari*, originally written in Judeo-Arabic, had been rescued by their Hebraization in medieval Spain), modern writers operating entirely beyond Jewish linguistic bounds were viewed as marginal. At best, they could await their turn.

This turn, it would seem, has now come at last. Wisse's book is one formidable indication of an upsurge of interest over the last decade in the Jewishness of 20th-century writers. Though it far surpasses them in ambition and achievement, it joins books like Leslie Fiedler's *Essays on Literature and Jewish Identity* (1991), Alice Stone Nakhimovsky's *Russian-Jewish Literature and Identity* (1992), Eugenia Prokop-Janiec's *Interwar Polish-Jewish Literature as a Cultural and Artistic Phenomenon* (1992), Hana Wirth-Nesher's *What Is Jewish Literature?* (1994), and Giuliano Baioni's *Kafka, Literature, and Judaism* (1994). Recent years have also

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seen a host of articles in literary journals and anthologies on such diverse subjects as "Identity and Diaspora: A Cross-Cultural Subversion and Redefinition of Nationhood" and "The Marrano Epic in the Literary Sephardism of Argentina"; university courses like "Diaspora and Jewish Fiction" and "Literature and Politics: The Case of Zionism"; and even the introduction into the curricula of Jewish secondary schools of authors like Philip Roth and Primo Levi. Suddenly, "Jewish writers on universal themes in non-Jewish languages" are "in."

Some of the reasons for this may be obvious. One is the gradual discovery and dissemination by literary critics of once-esoteric Jewish authors like Kafka, Babel, Schulz, Celan, and Walter Benjamin, who today have become de rigueur. Another is the influence of multiculturalism, with its interest in hybrid identities cutting across clear ethnic and national lines. The spread in Israel of post-Zionism, for which the primacy of Hebrew is no longer an issue, is also a contributing factor, as is the growth of a "neo-Diasporism" in America that is on the lookout for reformulations of Jewish identity within the framework of minority status. Concomitantly, a decreased fear of anti-Semitism has made Jews less defensive toward Jewish writing critical of Jewish life. And finally, the postmodernist assault on the "Western canon," which it has demanded be "opened" to allegedly excluded groups like women and minorities, has made canon-formation itself a hotly debated issue.

As if to put an official stamp of cultural entrepreneurship on all this activity, the well-funded and well-publicized National Yiddish Book Center of Amherst, Massachusetts, significantly expanding its activities beyond its original mandate, has now announced a "Great Jewish Books Program," culminating in an international panel of seven judges that will pick "the 100 great Jewish books of modern times in all languages." Once the selection process is completed, declares a recent press release, the program will turn to "reissuing out-of-print Jewish books, commissioning new English translations, and developing educational initiatives based on the list"—in other words, systematically introducing this vast body of material into the consciousness of American Jews. Ironically, it is in English rather than Hebrew that the sixth category of Bialik's *kinus* has at last found a willing sponsor.

2.

As ONE of the judges selected to serve on the panel of the Great Jewish Books Program, I have in my possession a shortlist from which the 100 winners are to be chosen. Drawn up in consultation with Jewish critics and teachers of literature from all over the world, it is in fact a dauntingly long list. Alphabetically arranged in it are 445 authors from Pearl Abraham, Hermann Adler, Shmuel Yosef Agnon, and Woody Allen to Herman Wouk, Louis Zukofsky, Arnold Zweig, and Stefan Zweig, and close to 2,500 individual titles. Of these, I have perhaps read 150, and while the batting average of other panelists may be better, one book in five would be an impressive achievement for anyone.

Looking at the columns of titles, in which appear such entries as two books in Spanish by Alcina Lubitch Domecq, six books in Russian by Osip Dymov, eight books in French by Armand Lunel, and twenty-eight books in English by Marge Piercy, all authors that in my ignorance I have never heard of, I wonder what is to be gained from even attempting the task of picking the lucky few. Agreeing as I do with Harold Bloom, who argues in his *The Western Canon* that great books are made by authors, not by committees or hegemonic power structures, I can think of no other qualified judge of literary greatness than Time. Since Time will not be a significant participant in the National Yiddish Book Center's panel, whose final decisions are due next year, what will those decisions be worth?

Just why we often have to wait a generation or two (though rarely more) after an author's death to arrive at a reliable judgment of his work is a puzzling question. Perhaps this has to do with the background noise of contemporary culture, which must fade before the solo authorial voice can be heard with sufficient clarity. In any event, while cultivated readers and even professional critics may overlook great works of their age while being taken in by more mediocre competitors—not to mention those most tragic of ultimately forgotten books, the very good but not uniquely outstanding ones—this rarely happens when going back in time. There, we have more perfect pitch; though literary taste has its fashions, and Byron will sometimes be preferred to Wordsworth and Wordsworth sometimes to Byron for as long as Romantic poetry is read, the remarkable thing about the literature of the past, as opposed to that of the present, is how little disagreement there is regarding it. The Latin poet Persius complained that "thick-headed Rome" preferred one Attius Labeo to his contemporary Juvenal, but who would take up cudgels for Attius today? And for all the voguish talk about unfairly neglected women, blacks, and "minor-literature" authors of the past, can one point to a single deserving representative of such groups who was not seated with the immortals long ago?

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No doubt the skittishness of still new reputations troubled Bialik, too. The contemporary books whose ratings we fight over will one day fall into rank by themselves; why not then rely on the literary marketplace—that is, on the slowly stabilizing preferences of readers, critics, publishers, and educators—to tell the distance runners from the sprinters? Give Homer enough time and, mysteriously enough, he will outsell even Harry Potter.

INDEED, LONG-TERM popularity has always made canons, which, conspiracy theory notwithstanding, tend to be little more than after-the-fact recognitions of a literary tradition's favorite works. Even the Hebrew Bible, the first and arguably the most important body of canonically defined literature in history, appears to have been consolidated on such a basis. Although we are ignorant of the exact process of its formation, we do know that its books were widely read, copied, and taught long before the final rabbinic seal of approval was put on them in the early years of the Common Era—far more widely than texts not included in holy writ, such as the Apocrypha or the Dead Sea Scrolls. While there is every indication, for example, that the Dead Sea sectaries knew and revered the same biblical books that the rabbis did, there is no sign that their own literature was read or appreciated by anyone but themselves.

Thus, while much of what failed to enter the Bible was unacceptably heterodox in any case, Robert Alter is surely correct to observe in his newly published *Canon and Creativity** that "it seems plausible that there were Hebrew texts excluded from the canon not for doctrinal reasons but because they were inferior as literature." If one takes even the most verbally accomplished of the Dead Sea writings, the poems of the "Scroll of Thanksgiving," and compares them with the biblical Psalms they were modeled on, this inferiority is evident at a glance. The same is true of the Apocrypha. The Book of Tobit has its charms, but these do not compare with Esther's or Ruth's; Jubilees is a dull and windy retelling of Genesis; next to the compiler of Proverbs, Ben-Sira is priggish and trite; Isaiah glows from its collision with a transcendent reality while 1 Enoch is flaccid with self-spun fantasy. In every case, it is the stronger book that ended up in the canon.

Alter is also just to remark on the converse—namely, that some books of the Bible, such as Job and the Song of Songs, presented doctrinal problems themselves and were canonized not because of their contents but in spite of them and by virtue of their literary power. The Song of Songs is a particularly good example because of the extravagant lengths to which the rabbis' reading of it went in order to justify its inclusion in the Bible, turning a highly sensual love poem into a religious allegory; and while it was their allegorization of the poem that made its canonization possible, it was their determination to canonize it, one feels, that (unconsciously, it may be) led to its allegorization. For a man like Rabbi Akiva, who held that "If all the Bible is holy, the Song of Songs is the holy of holies," the prospect of losing its rare beauty must have been, if not sufficient reason for admitting it to the protective sanctuary of Scripture, sufficient reason for finding a reason.

But is the situation different with modern authors like Kafka and Proust? Although, three-quarters of a century after their deaths, their greatness is beyond question, might we not be reading them extravagantly, too, when we interpret this greatness as singularly Jewish? Are we seeking to appropriate them for a tradition to which they do not intrinsically belong? And how is one to establish their relationship to this tradition? Using what criteria? We are back to the entanglements of Bialik's sixth category.

3.

YES TO Kafka, no to Proust: such is Ruth Wisse's verdict in her *The Modern Jewish Canon*.

Wisse, who teaches Yiddish literature at Harvard and is well known to COMMENTARY readers for her superb essays on Jewish culture and politics, begins her brief dismissal of Proust with an even briefer one of the American Jewish literary critic Lionel Trilling, whom she quotes as having remarked when a young man: "Being a Jew is like walking in the wind or swimming: you are touched at all points and conscious everywhere." Wisse then declares, "Had this insight informed [Trilling's] fiction, he would have secured a place of honor in the modern Jewish canon." But, she points out, Trilling's only novel, *The Middle of the Journey*, despite being set in a world of left-wing New York intellectuals that was in reality heavily Jewish, has not a Jew in it. Whether because Trilling "neutered" his main characters "to make [them] more purely American or because he could not find an aesthetic means of integrating Jewishness into his story, its consideration as a Jewish book," Wisse writes with genuine regret, "is precluded." And she goes on:

> If it hurts to omit Trilling, it aches to leave out Proust. Some critics consider Proust a Jewish writer despite the fact that he was baptized a

* Yale, 198 pp., $18.50.

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> Catholic and received communion when he was twelve. They may do so because Proust's mother, Jeanne Weil, came from a Jewish family in Metz in northeastern France, whose members he stayed in touch with all his life. Proust was deeply influenced by his mother and, through her, by his Jewishness. The social matrix of his work owes much to his firsthand knowledge of French Jewry. . . . [But] though Proust derives from the Jews and shows sympathy with their condition, he is at pains in his writing to show that he does not share in their fate. . . .[His] first-person narrator emphasizes his own exclusion from [the Jewish people]. . . .Though the narrator is also detached from the French majority . . . he is much more sorrowfully and explicitly estranged from the Jews. Proust's familiarity and sympathy do not translate into a novel of Jewish experience, however deep and persuasive its knowledge of the subject.

For Wisse, then, Trilling and Proust have stepped out of bounds by crossing opposite sidelines. The first does not belong in a Jewish canon because, while possessing a Jewish identity, he did not write about Jews; the second because, while writing about Jews, he did not possess a Jewish identity. Each represents a class in which other Jewish writers can be placed.

But what, then, of Kafka, who felt Jewish like Trilling but like Trilling kept Jews out of his fiction? Where is the logic in including him?

The logic, Wisse might reply, begins with Kafka's having kept many things out of his fiction, the "abstractness" of which has been frequently commented on. Since there are practically no Christians in it, either, or Czechs, Germans, names of countries, cities, or streets, or references to contemporary events, the lack of Jews merely follows a general rule. Jews must be looked for in Kafka symbolically—but when they are, one finds them everywhere.

Thus, Wisse contends in a chapter on Kafka's novel *The Trial*, the book's protagonist Joseph K., finding himself unreasonably and powerlessly under arrest one day, is in the typical situation of the "liberal Jew, who, having come to trust that reason *was* power, had forfeited the protection of God without shoring up any political alternative." In fact, Joseph K.'s basic guilt is being Jewish, or, more precisely, a Jew amid a German culture and language in which (like Kafka) he feels himself an intruder, so that his being put to death at the novel's end with the self-loathing knowledge that "the shame of it must outlive him" is, Wisse writes, "the price [he] pays for living in German, and the shame will outlive him because he has acquiesced in its terms."

THERE ARE other possible "Jewish" interpretations of *The Trial*, too, starting with the fact that "the Law" (*Das Gesetz*), the mysterious presence before which Joseph K. stands accused, is a term commonly used in German no less than in English for the Mosaic commandments—commandments that, according to Christian theology, are so beyond the human capacity for obedience that they render all men guilty by their very existence. Yet in a climactic section of the novel often reprinted separately as "the Parable of the Law," it is suggested to Joseph K. that the rigors of "the Law" are in reality accessible to everyone and even uniquely tailored to our individual needs, the difficulty being not their pitiless remoteness but a false illusion of this that deters us from approaching their "inextinguishable radiance." Read this way, *The Trial* is indeed a deeply Jewish book.

This raises a problem, however. "The Law" in *The Trial* can also be read, and has been read by most critics, as standing for other things, such as the bureaucratic apparatus of the modern state, the ruthless pseudojustice of 20th-century totalitarianism, the guilt-inducing operations of the superego, and so forth. This overdetermination is part of the brilliance of the novel, the various interpretations of which, far from canceling each other out, are mutually enriching. Certainly, therefore, there is no bar to construing *The Trial* in terms of Jewish themes as well, especially as we know from Kafka's letters and journals that these absorbed him greatly. Yet since doing so means choosing one set of possibilities out of many, and sometimes (as with other interpretations) reading against the grain (the "Parable of the Law" is related to Joseph K. by a Catholic priest, one of the few characters in Kafka's fiction whose religion is made explicit), can we not do this with other authors, too?

Why not with Proust, for example? Taken at face value, the many passages about Jews in *Remembrance of Things Past* do confirm Wisse's judgment that the novel's narrator is "at pains to show that he does not share their fate." But the same can be said of the many passages dealing with sexual inversion, a condition gradually revealed in the novel's course to affect more and more of its characters but never—though Proust's homosexuality was common knowledge in his lifetime—the narrator himself. Since no sophisticated reader would point to this as proof that Proust did not identify himself as a homosexual, why should the narrator's distancing himself from Jews demonstrate Proust's nonidentification as a Jew? There is even a lengthy passage in *Remembrance of Things Past* in which Jews are compared with homosexuals as social

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outcasts forced to choose between desperately concealing their true selves in order to "pass" or clannishly flaunting them in defensive self-segregation. What is to prevent one from pushing this analogy a step further, as some literary critics have done, by assuming the writer of this passage to have been not only Proust the homosexual, but also Proust the Jew?

Wisse herself is clearly aware of the fragility of resting the case for Jewish canonicity on the twin supports of Jewish subject matter and Jewish identity, each of which can be coaxed from the other, for much of her book is an argument for a standard that is stricter if also vaguer—namely, the insistence that both these aspects of a writer's Jewishness be, in some sense, enhancing of Jewish life. Not only, one suspects, would the failure to meet this standard be her fallback position on Proust, it is her express reason for excluding other writers—the seemingly arch-Jewish Bernard Malamud, for example, to whom she ascribes a caricaturized version of the Jew, ever doomed to be either the hapless shlemiel or the Christ-like sufferer.

This too is problematic, however. It is not that Wisse is unsubtle in her discriminations. Far from it; her discussions of the writers on her far-ranging list are both delicate and wonderfully penetrating, and taken together they make a strong case for the multilingual Jewish literature whose existence she sets out to prove. (Among these writers are Sholom Aleichem; Mendele; Kafka; Babel; Grossman; Primo Levi; the Polish novelist Henryk Grynberg; the Hebrew authors Yosef Haim Brenner, S.Y. Agnon, and Aharon Appelfeld; the Yiddish novelist Isaac Bashevis Singer, the Yiddish poets Yakov Glatstein and Moshe Kulbak; the Canadian poet I.M. Klein; and the Americans Abraham Cahan, Henry and Philip Roth, Bellow, and Cynthia Ozick.) She can take a novelist like Brenner, accused by some Hebrew critics of "Jewish self-hatred" despite his practical commitment to Zionism, and explain why, by having "clear[ed] away the detritus of sickly guilt" clogging the Jewish soul, he qualifies for inclusion. And, writing against her own conservative political views, she can admiringly explicate the short stories in Babel's *Red Cavalry*, written by a committed Bolshevik, and demonstrate how well they probe this same soul.

In the final analysis, though, one doubts whether her criteria, while they work well for her, are generally applicable. Although it may seem reasonable to expect a Jewish canon to serve Jewish needs, it is less reasonable to make it contingent on them; for even were it possible to agree on what those needs are, it makes little sense to demand recognition for "modern Jewish literature" on a basis of parity with other literatures while judging it by standards uniquely its own. What English critic would bar D.H. Lawrence from the English canon because he despised England and wanted nothing to do with it, or argue that, because Joyce refused to step on Irish soil for the entirety of his adult life, only a close examination of the attitudes toward Ireland in his fiction can determine whether he belongs to Irish literature?

SHALL WE then abandon this line of approach and look for another—perhaps a more formal one, like that taken by Alter in his *Canon and Creativity*? This slim volume is a study of how, even in modern times, the ancient Jewish canon of the Bible has gone on exerting its influence on major writers. For his purposes, Alter has chosen three very different texts: one, Bialik's long narrative Hebrew poem "The Dead of the Desert," written by a man raised and educated in the world of East-European Jewish Orthodoxy; a second, Kafka's *Amerika*, whose author was the product of a partially assimilated Jewish home in Central Europe; and a third, Joyce's *Ulysses*, the work of a renegade Irish Catholic with a polymath's knowledge of European culture. While the question of a modern Jewish canon is not explicitly raised by him, Alter's project is relevant to Wisse's because, by tracing the ways in which the Bible has remained productive in modern authors, it seems to suggest a solution to our dilemma.

Predictably, Alter's analysis of "The Dead of the Desert" is the least surprising, for not only is Bialik's immersion in the Bible evident in all he wrote, the poem itself takes off from a rabbinic legend based on the Bible. More illuminating is the chapter on Kafka's *Amerika*, the plot of which, Alter shows, contains numerous parallels with the books of Genesis and Exodus. But most intriguing is the section on *Ulysses*, a novel famous for being patterned on Homer's *Odyssey* even though its main character, Leopold Bloom, is a Jew. By dissecting key images, Alter demonstrates that the Bible is "a necessary complement to Homer in Joyce's literary scheme," the two working together to enable Joyce "to take stock of the literary origins of the Western tradition," so that "in the extraordinarily supple and varied uses to which the Bible is put in *Ulysses*, it is converted into a secular literary text, but perhaps not entirely secular, after all, because it is reasserted as a source of value and vision."

As Alter observes, canonicity sets in motion a self-reinforcing dynamic. Originally conferred on certain books because they are more resonant than others, it compels us to pay them a different kind

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of attention—one which teases out their riches in the form of new books that become the objects of further creative exegesis, and so on and so forth. Why not base our modern Jewish canon, then, on books that form a link in this chain, of which the Bible is forever the prime mover?

A promising idea—but no more than that; for the fact that we find a voice like Joyce's taking part in this collective conversation (there are even allusions to rabbinic literature in *Ulysses*) shows how unsatisfactory a diagnostic tool it is. Surely Joyce does not belong in a modern Jewish canon because of this, any more than he does because Leopold Bloom is a Jew.

This suggests an interesting thought experiment. Suppose a biographer were to unearth the fact that, unbeknownst to him, Joyce had had a Jewish grandparent who died before he was born: would *this* win him a place in a Jewish canon? If yes, why should a trivial biographical fact make a difference? If no, how many Jewish grandparents would it take? And suppose the reverse were true, and Joyce had written *Ulysses* under the mistaken impression that a grandparent of his was Jewish—what then? Or suppose *Ulysses* had been published anonymously and we did not know who its author was?

Such questions are absurd. They are a sign that *something is wrong with our thinking.*

4.

LET US try another experiment, this time by going back to the biblical book of Job. A curious thing about this book is that there is nothing in it to prove that its author was an Israelite or even particularly familiar with biblical religion, some of the premises of which he sharply calls into question. Indeed, one theory about him (now rather discredited) has been that he was not a Jew and did not write his book in Hebrew, a language into which it was later translated. Suppose that a new archeological or textual find were to prove that this theory was correct. Would Jews have to excise Job from the Hebrew canon?

Obviously not. The book of Job, even if it turns out to have originally been "a work of universal nature written in a non-Jewish language," is an integral part of Jewish literary tradition. The issue of its provenance is irrelevant to its place in this tradition, just as irrelevant as is the fact that, Christian and Western culture having appropriated Job for themselves, most non-Jews would not consider it a Jewish book.

This should be our answer. We have in a sense been barking up the wrong tree. The question of provenance—who wrote a given text, with what personal background, motives, and opinions—cannot ultimately determine a modern Jewish canon, any more than it can determine a text's worth. What matters is less where a book is coming from than where it is going: to, or not to, a lasting engagement with other Jewish books.

Of course, provenance matters. Kafka stands a better chance of entering such an engagement than Proust because he wrestled with Jewish issues more strenuously. And if, despite its literary greatness and Jewish subject matter, Jews do not feel that *Ulysses* is a book they must address as Jews, this may indeed be because Joyce was raised as an Irish Catholic, or because, as Wisse remarks in unfavorably comparing the novel with George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, there is nothing Jewishly enhancing about it. But although *Ulysses* will probably never become a Jewish book, that is not something that can be determined a priori: one can, after all, conceive of a future in which *Ulysses* would be so widely read and responded to by Jews that it would be considered a necessary part of a Jewish education. Time, the one arbiter of literary greatness, will decide whether to capture such greatness for a Jewish orbit—which is all the more reason to give Time a prod on behalf of the books we most care about.

There are Jews who might ask who needs a modern Jewish canon at all. I can imagine one such Jew regarding me right now, his hand resting on an open Talmud. "So!" he says with an ironic gleam. "The Bible you already know! The Mishnah and Gemara you've learned by heart! Would that all Jews had studied as much and had time for your Kafka and your Proust!"

I do not make light of this man. He pricks a sore conscience. But that is neither here nor there: Bialik heard similar words from his teachers at the yeshiva of Volozhin in Lithuania over a hundred years ago, and *his* conscience, to judge from his poetry, was in a worse state than ours. It is too late in the day to reopen that old argument. All that needs to be observed is that, since all Jewish arguments that are, as the rabbis put it, "for the sake of heaven" are in some sense over books, it is better for them to be over the same books.

If one looks at the great schisms in Jewish history, the breaking point has always been textual: writings accepted as canonical by one side but not by the other. To some, this may be a reason for not seeking to expand the Jewish canon beyond its traditional bounds. But if modern Jews are going to converse with each other and not only with tradition, they will need common great books of their own. Otherwise, they will be talking to the wall.

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Education and the Election

Chester E. Finn, Jr.

WHETHER OR not education lives up to its early billing as the premier issue in this year's presidential election may not be known until after November 7, if then. But if the polls are reliable, it should at least rank near the top. With the economy booming, crime down, and the cold war over, the parlous condition of our schools heads the list of concerns of American voters.

And little wonder. Since 1983, when a blue-ribbon commission issued *A Nation at Risk*, report after report has documented the weak performance of U.S. primary and secondary education. Low academic achievement is the most salient problem, but it is not the only one. It is accompanied—and exacerbated—by mediocre teachers, inept administrators, dysfunctional school boards, heedless parents, superficial or eccentric curricula, violence, drugs, and even a recent spate of high-profile shootings.

The impulse to right this mess has given rise to a veritable "school-reform" industry, with variegated solutions being proffered by government officials (recall the ambitious national goals set by President George Bush and the nation's governors in 1989), education experts, and business leaders alike. Much has been tried and billions spent, most of it without discernible impact. Behind today's veil of prosperity, the nation's schools are as much "at risk" as ever.

Of late, however, things have begun to change. Having learned from the costly fecklessness of earlier reform efforts, which naively trusted the public-education system to fix itself if only enough money and expertise were thrown at it, a number of states and communities have grown tougher-minded and less credulous. For the first time in a long time, there are grounds for hope.

Two strategies are particularly promising. One, known as "standards-based" reform, relies on externally set academic norms that spell out what children are supposed to learn; tests that determine how well they have learned it; and test-based rewards and sanctions up and down the system, from individual children to teachers, principals, and superintendents, aimed at providing tangible incentives to teach better, study harder, and learn more.

The second strategy also relies on pressure from outside the system, this time from market forces. Reform based on introducing competition, whether through vouchers, charter schools, open-enrollment schemes, or the outsourcing of public-school management to private firms, seeks both to move some children into better situations right away and to trigger improvements for all children over the long haul.

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Supporters of both approaches can point to encouraging interim results, and are understandably exhilarated. Neither strategy, however, has yet swept the country. Not only is each of them opposed by the public-school establishment, but there are already signs of a backlash developing as conventional schools, public and sometimes private, have begun to feel crowded by the competition, as sizable numbers of children have begun to fail state proficiency tests and been "held back" or denied diplomas, and as teachers and other employees of the system have begun to come up against the tangible consequences—sometimes pleasant, sometimes not—that have become newly tied to the results they achieve.

LEAST OF all has the spirit of reform made inroads in Washington, D.C. There, in the seat of federal government, education policy remains frozen in time, the antiquated product of Lyndon B. Johnson's presidency and 35 years of legislative acquiescence. The programs enacted under this decades-old mindset reflect a continuing obeisance to education-school experts and the near-stranglehold of establishment lobbyists. Just as bad, they also reflect the abiding belief that the system yearns to boost its own productivity and can be trusted to do right by children so long as enough money flows and enough regulations guide its benign intentions toward the proper priorities.

These programs waste tens of billions of dollars every year: not surprisingly, some educators have stopped even thinking of them as engines of improvement and have come to regard them as predictable, if bureaucratically cumbersome, cash streams. Whatever their stated goals—closing the learning gap between rich and poor pupils, preparing children from troubled neighborhoods to succeed in elementary school, assisting the disabled to learn, or ensuring that teachers themselves possess the requisite knowledge and skills—they have failed to achieve them. The biggest among them—notably Title I and special education—are textbook cases of good intentions gone awry.

Their greatest drawback, however, is the *ideas* they propagate—ideas that fly in the face of today's most promising strategies of reform. Almost all federal programs emphasize inputs and services rather than standards and results. They rely on theories of change (top-down, uniform, rule-based, bureaucratic) long since abandoned by the private sector and even by some in government. And so, besides failing in their own terms, many of these programs now actively interfere with efforts by governors and mayors to repair their own schools.

In short, the federal role in public schooling has come to resemble the federal role in welfare before it was reformed: a virtual museum of failed policies, antique programs, ingrained habits, and dubious ideas. Perhaps even more fierce than in welfare, however, is the resistance to change. After decades of carving channels through the bureaucratic bedrock, federal programs have become deeply entrenched not only in Washington but in state and local systems and budget assumptions. A myriad of interest groups battens on their subsidies and depends on their regulations, and the programs have developed cultures of their own that mire them ever more deeply in the habits of denial and self-protection. Head Start, for example, is so wedded to its self-definition as a "child-development" program addressing social, nutritional, and medical needs that its partisans fight efforts to impose a curriculum that might finally succeed in preparing low-income toddlers to read when they reach school. The net result is that even as a growing pile of evaluations shows that the federal government's efforts in primary and secondary school are ineffectual or much worse, our national addiction to them deepens.

FOR THIS last development, we can largely thank Bill Clinton. Before his day, Washington's impact on elementary and secondary education, however baleful, was also still fairly limited—and so were expectations of its potential significance. Despite hundreds of programs and billions of dollars, the federal government was unmistakably the junior partner, providing just 7 percent of the K-12 budget, running essentially no schools, conferring no diplomas, employing no teachers. National political figures might stir the country in one direction or another, but nobody in the White House or on Capitol Hill exercised much *direct* leverage on what actually happened in U.S. schools.

The two political parties dealt with these limitations in their stereotypical ways. With damn-the-torpedoes bravado and an appetite for greater influence on actual practices, Democrats would regularly urge still more programs, more money, heavier regulation, and ever-greater federal involvement. Republicans, by contrast, held to the notion that the less impact, the better; many believed that Washington should withdraw from K-12 education altogether, or at least convert the government's innumerable "categorical" programs into "block grants" or vouchers. The debate, in other words, was about federalism, with one side

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asserting that the national government had a large and properly proactive place and the other insisting that Washington should get out of the way and leave parents and local school boards in charge.

The U.S. Department of Education, created in 1979 to fulfill Jimmy Carter's political deal with the National Education Association, the country's largest teachers' union, became a high-profile symbol of this clash. For years, Republicans kept threatening to abolish it, but got nowhere; indeed, they never really tried very hard. (Ronald Reagan could not find even a single member of Congress willing to sponsor his bill to scrap the department, and instead ended up appointing the feisty William J. Bennett to head it.) Nor did the GOP fare very well in advancing any sort of coherent agenda. Never in the majority when critical legislation was on the docket, Republicans only occasionally put forward proposals of their own, and these were likely to involve, at most, an incremental shift in established practices or a tepid recycling of timeworn schemes that never went anywhere. When the annual appropriations crunch arrived, the GOP, as if to make amends with the public, customarily joined in approving even more money for existing programs.

This awkward position, with Republicans regularly made to look like both deadbeats and hypocrites, only worsened after the 1994 midterm election, when the new GOP majority in Congress briefly espoused a slash-and-burn strategy that Clinton easily turned against it. But the Republicans' real punishment came with Clinton's success in obliterating the federalism question altogether, a feat he accomplished by means of his ever-adroit ability to shift discussion from principle to quantity, from "should I?" to "how much?," from "is this a good idea?" to "how do I sell this?"

Sensing that the public was tired of abstract arguments about who should do what in education and was yearning for someone simply to say he would take care of it, and undeterred by Washington's miserable track record, Clinton set in motion a whirlwind of activity, much of it unrelated even to his own major education themes (such as "standards-based reform"). The point was simply to hurl a new scheme or more money at any and every education malady or enthusiasm that tested well in surveys and focus groups, ranging from school uniforms to smaller class size, from Internet access to teacher training, from after-school programs to a doubling of the Head Start program, from national testing to school construction. Despite a statutory ban on direct federal involvement with curriculum, Clinton's Education Department even published its own list of recommended math-instruction programs and prepared to do the same in science, technology, and women's studies.

Such activism, not to say promiscuousness, has been hugely expensive. The department's "discretionary" budget has risen by about 50 percent during the Clinton-Gore years, and so has the number of programs that it runs. But whether these programs do any good is another question—and easily answered. Perhaps the most conspicuous example is Clinton's tireless effort to reduce class size (and hire more teachers) across the board. The unions love him for it, and the idea sounds wonderful to many parents. And yet, besides being perhaps the costliest education "reform" of all, it seldom leads to stronger student achievement, and experience (notably in California) shows that it brings untoward consequences, like a shortage of classroom space and the entry of more ill-educated teachers into the ranks. Still, it has been a useful campaign tool, and one that Clinton has been able to wield against resistant Republicans (whom he has recently taunted for harboring "philosophical" doubts about an ever-expanding federal role). Above all, it has helped habituate the public to the idea that, for every imaginable educational woe, there can and most likely will be a new, Washington-style remedy.

THIS, THEN, is the backdrop against which the present election drama is being played out. But this year has also witnessed an interesting reversal of roles. For the first time, it is the Republican candidate who has an imaginative program, a high degree of articulateness about education, and a track record of accomplishment, while the Democratic standard-bearer is, by contrast, something of a newcomer to the field.

George W. Bush's Texas offers, indeed, one of the brightest spots on the national education horizon. The most populous state after California, it has been making measurable educational progress, progress that has been undeniably good for its own sons and daughters and that carries a large measure of national significance as well. Although Bush cannot claim sole credit for the improvement—many of the Texas reforms hark back to a mid-1980's commission headed by, of all people, Ross Perot—nearly everyone agrees that he deserves a lot of it.

On display in the Lone Star state are both of today's most promising new strategies. Pursuing standards-based reform, the Bush team has strengthened Texas's all-encompassing system of rigorous

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tests and accountability for schools and students alike, rebuffing attacks on it from Left and Right. Pursuing competitive-style reform, Bush and his associates have added hundreds of charter schools, welcomed privately funded voucher projects, encouraged experiments with private management of public schools, loosened rigid certification rules for teachers and boosted their pay. Moreover, he has accomplished most of this with bipartisan backing, the intense involvement of the business community, and the support of many educators—and, sometimes, even with the assent of the teachers' unions.

"I'm very proud of what we've accomplished in this state," says president John Cole of the Texas Federation of Teachers; and there is reason to be proud. In terms of pupil performance, Texas emerges from objective studies as the first or second "most improved" state over the past decade. More remarkably, the state's least privileged youngsters are at or near the head of the line. In 1996, black fourth graders from Texas led black youngsters across the nation in math. Hispanic eighth graders ranked second in writing. And despite a vast minority population, a flood of recent Mexican immigrants, and a comparatively low rate of spending per pupil, Texas eighth graders overall ranked fourth in the country in writing.

Bush, then, loves to talk about school reform and knows a great deal about the subject, showcased it at the GOP convention in Philadelphia, and is full of ambitious plans for what he would do as President to cure the nation's ailing schools. As for Al Gore, his Democratic opponent, he has never held any of the state or local offices that bring hands-on experience with education, largely ignored the subject during his career in the House and Senate, and, even though the Clinton-Gore administration's record of activism in this field is unmatched, Gore's own fingerprints are visible only on the effort to link schools to the Internet. In general, one could fairly say that education remains an issue he is not particularly at home with. (To make matters worse, there is the awkward fact that his four children attended elite private schools, even as Gore now staunchly opposes vouchers for the poor.)

There is, admittedly, a wrinkle that spoils this perfect contrast, and it is once again attributable to Bill Clinton's success in erasing the issue of federalism. For the first time in U.S. history, this year's contest simply ignores the question of whether Washington *should* be involved in transforming K-12 education. Rather, it is a contest between two different conceptions of education policy, both of which depend on a proactive, big-spending, muscular federal role.

If George W. Bush were to convince the American people to elect him as a dynamic "education President," he would perforce need powerful tools and levers with which to press for changes in the system. Besides, he has seen for himself that, when it comes to reforming bad schools, "local control" is not always everything it is cracked up to be: school boards and superintendents do not always do right by children, and sometimes it is necessary to take power *away* from them in order to effect improvement. Translated to the national scene, this would inevitably mean using the federal government and thus—again inevitably—adding to its clout.

In this narrow but important respect, therefore, Bush does not differ all that much from Al Gore, who comes bearing his own, Clintonesque basket of beguiling new programs and costly new initiatives. Basically, the difference between the two men comes down to something else, namely, their dissimilar answers to two key questions: does the energy for change in American K-12 education come mostly from the bottom up (parents, schools, communities, states) or from the top down, i.e., from Washington? And when choices must be made, does one favor education's consumers or its producers? At the end of the day, Bush seems to believe in an upward flow, whereas Gore, even more so than Clinton, seems to regard the nation's capital as the sun in the education solar system, the place from which light and energy emanate. Similarly, Bush is clear—most days—that children's welfare is the main consideration, while Gore's loving embrace of, and by, the national teachers' unions signals that he will work within the system, a system as resistant to change as it is zealous for the interests of its employees.

ONE OF these two candidates will become President. What then? Much will depend, of course, on whether he has the cooperation of Congress, and on how much is controlled by interest groups. History and common sense alike suggest that Gore would have the easier time of it: his proposals are mostly incremental, add-ons rather than transformations, less disruptive of established interests—and they come accompanied by promises of a great deal more money. Bush, by contrast, has threatened to overturn more inherited dogmas and power relationships, to press harder on such sensitive political nerves as testing, teacher competence, and school choice—and to offer fewer new billions (although he is hardly a skinflint).

On the other hand, and particularly if Republicans keep control of Congress, Bush, assuming he

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stuck to his guns, might enjoy an advantage of his own. For, over the past year and a half, congressional Republicans have begun to overcome their own tradition of half-hearted support for half-baked schemes, and have rallied behind some reasonably bold changes in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as well as in the domain of federally sponsored research. Despite intense Democratic opposition—and the threat of a Clinton veto—the House under GOP leadership passed a bill that would let ten states experiment with dramatically different ways of using their federal education money while boosting their accountability for student achievement. (Participating states would thus function much like giant charter schools, winning freedom from regulation in return for sharply improved performance.) The Senate education committee boosted the number of states to fifteen and added a modest provision that would give students the right to take their Title I dollars to (a limited array of) other educational institutions.

These were just baby steps, and anyway they have temporarily halted: election-year politics will keep the Senate from completing action in 2000. But even baby steps are a start. In a better world, one where the nature and extent of a federal role in K-12 education were still open to serious deliberation, one might dream of attempting once again to persuade Washington simply to fold its tent and allow reform-minded governors and mayors to proceed as they have been proceeding. But thanks to Bill Clinton's insatiability and the clumsiness of GOP lawmakers, that possibility is gone, perhaps forever. And so, if the federal role is with us to stay, anyone who cares about the state of American education is well advised to try to make it, however incrementally, as constructive as possible.

As it happens, most of the LBJ-era programs are due for their periodic congressional reauthorization, creating a unique opportunity for a top-to-bottom overhaul of the role bequeathed by the 1960's. There is no detailed formula for this, but for general direction one should surely be looking to the hopeful developments around the land that have themselves been powered by the dual engines of standards-based and marketplace-style reform. That, indeed, is where a President could come in, lending a hand and a well-amplified voice, and above all helping to minimize harm. If Bush—or, for that matter, Gore—actually caught this wave, something significant might yet happen to alter Washington's long and sorry record of involvement with the nation's schools.

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The Master's Ring

A Story

Joseph Epstein

When the *New York Times* reported the death last year of Malcolm Gaynor, the literary biographer, at ninety-one, it made mention of the ring. A large green stone in a gold setting, it had lain on Malcolm's wedding-ring finger the day he came to Chicago to speak to the members of the Institute for Psychoanalysis. I thought it a touch gaudy for his otherwise understated manner, but I did not then know to whom it had originally belonged: the Master, the great American novelist who was the subject of the splendid three-volume work that had made Malcolm's reputation and given him his small but quite real claim to a place in literary history.

I did not really know Malcolm all that well, having met him for the first time on that day in Chicago. Afterward we corresponded a fair amount, and I reviewed the second and third volumes of his biography, praising it and holding back my reservations, which chiefly centered on his rather heavy psychoanalyzing of his subject. I assumed he found me an agreeable enough younger man—there were more than 30 years between us—if not a brother under the skin, the two of us upholding the torch of literature in a mildly depraved and sadly deprecatory age.

I sensed but wasn't altogether certain that Malcolm was Jewish. He carried himself—how should I say?—rather tweedily, like an academic of the bad old days, the days when, frankly, types like Malcolm and me were not wanted in English departments. Only subsequently did I learn that, at some point in the 1930's, he had changed his name from Max Goldstein. As a young journalist, he had had a Communist phase, and I suspected—wrongly, as it would turn out—that it had been in order to improve his chances in the party that he chose an Anglicized name. But the change would have served him well even after he left the party, especially during his years in Paris when his interests had turned literary and he met such figures as James Joyce and Edith Wharton, and later still when he encountered—and briefly became the amanuensis of—Bernard Berenson. Berenson too was a Jew, which didn't prevent him from being a bit of an anti-Semite, anti-Semitism being never so subtle as when wielded by one who has suffered at its hands.

Certainly Malcolm Gaynor stood a better chance of insinuating himself with the Master's descendants, now among the most *distingué* of American families, than Max Goldstein. And insinuate himself Malcolm did. The family gave him permission to inspect all the Master's papers and, eventually, the right to edit his letters and notebooks. Malcolm, as they used to say about the guy with sole rights to a concession at the fairgrounds, had the *X* on the Master. Just as, for Lawrence of Arabia, the only way to Aqaba lay through the desert, so the only way to the Master lay through Malcolm; and, for his

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own good reasons, Malcolm did not trouble to smooth that way for other scholars.

A great theme of the Master's fiction is the dominance of one human being over another. Malcolm dominated the dead Master. But he also needed him. Writing about him made Malcolm a better biographer and a keener and more penetrating critic than he would otherwise have been. Seven or eight years before he died, Malcolm produced a small book on the pre-Raphaelite writers and painters: thin, snobbish, superfluous stuff. Somehow, the Master lent him authority and gravity—without him, Malcolm was merely one more, rather dim, academic biographer.

Still another of the Master's great themes, playing through nearly all his works, is betrayal. Malcolm's sympathy for the Master was complete, yet he interpreted him through a Freudian filter that, my guess is, the Master himself would have found not just inadequate but utterly, really quite hideously, coarse. All artists despise Freud, or at least they should, for behind all great art is an unannounced protest against the overdetermination of character in which Freud, genius though he was, may be said to have specialized. Malcolm was not an artist; he was a critic and a scholar, and he had to use the tools at hand. But the Master, a consummate artist, would have found these tools woefully crude, if not, indeed, traitorous.

BUT I began by invoking the Master's ring, which the *New York Times* duly touched upon in its obituary. I don't know how Malcolm came into possession of it. Perhaps he found it in a drawer in the old house in Sussex where the Master, having left London, spent the last years of his life before and during World War I; or possibly it was among the papers and final effects kept by his family after his death. But as soon as I read about the ring, I knew I wanted to own it. And the more I thought about it, the more deeply, urgently, passionately I wanted it.

My life is not really about material possessions. I've craved a few things, but none of them has been all that difficult to obtain. One was a gold Dunhill lighter that, selling for $40 or so, seemed to me, in my early twenties, a very great extravagance. For the better part of a month I was hardly able to think of anything else, and I finally bought the thing if only to get my mind back on my work. Much later I underwent a similar craving for a German fountain pen, a $300 Pelikan, and once again the only way to calm myself was to walk in and buy it, silly self-indulgence that it was. These little tales may make me seem trivial, but I hope they also reveal my honesty about a possibly pathetic but not completely disqualifying weakness.

As for the ring, the ring with its large green stone and gold setting, the ring worn by the Master, I found myself thinking about it at odd but insistent moments: standing in the shower, at meals, in the midst of teaching one of my classes at the University of Michigan or while working on wholly unrelated matters, after and sometimes even during lovemaking. How elegant that ring would look on the fourth finger of my right hand! The gold, as I remembered, was dull and only lightly burnished. ("I can stand a great deal of gold," wrote the Master, who had vainly hoped to acquire enough of it to remove the financial pressure from writing.) The Master's ring—why *shouldn't* I have it? It oughtn't be allowed to sit in a vault, or even in a glass case in a museum. Besides, I knew the Master's mind and loved his work as much as anyone, and especially now that Malcolm Gaynor, the only man who knew the Master better, was dead, I felt I deserved it.

I decided to write to Malcolm's widow in San Francisco, where Malcolm had retired to write memoirs that he never completed. This was a second, late-life marriage; in his mid-seventies, he had left a wife of many years to marry a younger woman. Was she a former student? A younger faculty member? A connection of Malcolm's through the psychiatric and therapeutic world—the shrinkoisie, as I thought of them? I had no idea. I wrote to her cold, noting that I would be in San Francisco in a few weeks to attend a meeting of the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics. As an old admirer and correspondent of her late husband's, I wondered if I might perhaps take her to lunch or meet her for an afternoon drink.

WE MET in the ornate lobby of the Fairmont Hotel on Nob Hill, where, off in the corner, they did an English tea. I had assumed that, like Malcolm, Angela Gaynor would be an Anglophile. I was wrong. As it emerged, nothing I had assumed about her was true. She was younger than I, perhaps in her early fifties; tallish (Malcolm had been 5'4" at best and, with his carefully groomed white mustache and bald pate, looked rather like the *Esquire* man); elegant, without a trace of the dreary style of academic women; blonde with eyes of almost periwinkle blue; and still quite striking—"stunning," the women of my mother's generation would have called her.

"You must be Professor Shapiro," she said as she approached, holding out a long-fingered hand. She

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was wearing dark blue trousers, an azure-colored silk shirt, no jewelry other than small gold earrings and a plain gold bracelet. Her hair was cut short. She had the high cheekbones and clean smile of a well-born, well-cared-for woman of means.

"It's very good to meet you," I said, directing her to where I had reserved a table. "You must know San Francisco well."

"I love it," she said as we were seated. "Malcolm agreed to move here, to finish out his career at Berkeley, because of me."

"Was he spending most of his time on his memoirs?"

"Yes, but for the past two or three years his energy was so depleted that he couldn't give them much time. The sadness of his last years came from knowing he wasn't likely to finish his final project."

"How large is the manuscript?"

"That's the problem. It's more than 400 pages, and it only takes him up to his twenties, the years he lived in France."

"Maybe parts of it," I said, "could be cut out and published as discrete pieces. I wonder if you'd mind my looking at it."

"Not at all," she said. "You'd know better than I. I'm not very literary. Malcolm used to be amused at the things I hadn't read. But then I didn't grow up in a bookish home."

"The Master writes somewhere that 'women aren't literary in any substantial sense of the term,' implying, I think, that they're rather more attractive when not."

"I'll try to remember that. My parents lived in Libertyville, outside Chicago. My father was a vice president of Prudential, and I suppose we were pretty outdoorsy. They died in a plane accident in India, on an around-the-world tour, when I was twenty."

I remembered Libertyville as the home of Adlai Stevenson. Very horsy. Very rich. No Jews in those days. What must her parents, if they had been alive, have thought of their daughter's marriage to the former Max Goldstein? What did she see in him, I wondered?

"How did you and Malcolm meet, if I may ask?"

"At a lecture series where he was speaking on Jung and D. H. Lawrence. I didn't really care about either. I was with a friend who was a graduate student and was very big on Lawrence. Malcolm was dazzling. I'd never met anyone who seemed on such easy terms with culture—all of culture. The therapists in the room were in awe of him. We met at the reception afterward. What he saw in me, I'll never know."

I thought it unnecessary to reply. The remainder of our meeting went smoothly enough, and we made a date for the following morning at her house where she would show me Malcolm's manuscript and other papers.

It was one of those mornings—sunny, in the low 70's, a light breeze blowing off the bay—when not to live in San Francisco seemed an act of genuine stupidity. I was a bit early, so I got out of my cab three blocks away and walked to Angela Gaynor's house on Larkin Street near the top of Russian Hill. No one I passed appeared to be over thirty, and everyone was beautiful.

From the outside the house seemed modest enough, but indoors it was impressively Italianate, Venetian without the surrounding water or tourists: high ceilings, lots of good dark wood, arched entranceways. Turkey rugs, as the Master's generation called Oriental rugs, were nicely positioned in the rooms I passed through. Tapestries rather than paintings hung on the walls. I counted four small Degas bronzes, all of dancers, whether real or copies I did not know enough to say, but I would have been willing to bet they were real.

One could see the Master himself living comfortably here, as Malcolm could hardly have failed to note. It was here that he completed the final volume of his edition of the Master's letters, wearing, no doubt, the ring with the green stone as he put the last period to this monumental work. Gazing about, I pondered again the extent of Malcolm's own identification with the "great indefatigable alchemist," as a poet once described this most subtle of modern novelists. And was Malcolm's, I also began to wonder, a story that the Master himself ought to have written?

Angela Gaynor was in every way up to the beauty of the day and the grandeur of her house. She was in sandals and wore a loose skirt of a creamy taupe that swished and swirled wonderfully as she moved about. Her otherwise mannish shirt, collarless and of a soft blue, played nicely against the color of her eyes, and her hair was brushed back, emphasizing her good bones and high color. I could easily imagine her a hundred years earlier in a large hat and a light dress on the lawn of an English estate, at one of those aristocratic parties of which the Master never seemed to tire. The two most beautiful words in the English language, he once said, were "summer afternoon." Angela Gaynor looked like a summer afternoon.

"Professor Shapiro, I've thought further about your offer to read my husband's unfinished mem-

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oir. I think Malcolm would have been pleased." She ushered me into a large room from which one could see the bay. "This was my husband's study."

The room looked strangely familiar: the colors of the upholstery and rugs, the wall hangings, the furniture, the impressive arched window. And then it dawned on me—it was a very careful reconstruction of the Master's garden room at his house in Sussex. The placement of the large glass bookcase, the desk against the wall, the small table and vases under the window, all were just as the Master had arranged them. The same du Maurier print hung on the wall. Even the escritoire with its fold-out writing surface where the Master composed his letters was perfectly duplicated here. It was a trifle eerie; perhaps more than a trifle.

From a lower drawer in the escritoire Angela Gaynor now removed an ample brown folder tied by a thick black ribbon. "Malcolm's memoirs," she said. "He had another copy made before he died, but I'd be grateful if you would return this one to me before you leave San Francisco."

"With pleasure," I said. And then I added, with, I hoped, the suggestion of an afterthought: "Whatever became of the Master's ring, which I remember your husband wearing?"

"Malcolm loved that ring. He would have wanted to be buried with it if he hadn't decided to be cremated. I took it to Sotheby's after his death. It wasn't worth even a thousand dollars. A great writer apparently doesn't command the prices of a Liberace or a Marilyn Monroe. Would you like to see it?"

"Yes," I said, trying to show no emotion. "Yes, I would, actually."

From another drawer she extracted a leather box. Along with the ring, it held a small silver container.

"It's a stamp box, a gift from the Master—forgive me, I seem to have picked up Malcolm's habit of addressing him that way— to that American woman novelist, the descendant of James Fenimore Cooper, I forget her name. I gather people now think she killed herself because of his coldness to her."

"Constance Fenimore Woolson. What did Malcolm think?"

"I don't know, but my guess is that he wouldn't have believed it. For Malcolm the Master could do no wrong, especially in the line of thoughtfulness."

She handed me the ring. The gold was dull, just as I remembered, but it was heavier than I would have guessed, with the flat green stone running across the top. I balanced it in the palm of my hand. It had a splendid heft.

"Do you mind if I slip it on?"

"Of course not," she said.

The fit, on the fourth finger of my right hand, was perfect. Odd: the Master was a man of a certain bulk—he looked, several people noted, more like a sea captain than a novelist—yet his fingers must have been fairly thin if this ring could sit so snuggly on my own rather slender hand. Perhaps spinning out those fine discriminations over five decades had kept his hands thin. I felt no talismanic magic from having the ring on my finger, but I also didn't want to return it.

It would be a mistake, I sensed, to offer to buy it. But neither could I ask Angela Gaynor if she had plans for its disposition. Instead, I decided right there that I would have to devise a way to inveigle it from her. To be truthful, I suppose I had intended to do so from the start. My first thought was to ingratiate myself so thoroughly that it would naturally occur to her to offer it to me. Then again I might have to come up with something more devious. Whatever it took, I felt I was up to the task.

"I envy you possession of this ring," I said, slipping it off my finger and returning it to her hand. "I hope some day you'll find a proper repository for it."

"Perhaps you can help me think where," she said.

"That would be nice. But now let me take Malcolm's memoir, which I'm very eager to read. I'll report back to you in a few days."

At the door, as we shook hands, she thanked me yet again for spending time on her husband's work.

"Please," I said. "After all, Malcolm and I belonged to the same club." And then I quoted to her a characteristic sentence from one of the Master's stories that I had by heart: "'We're a numerous band, partakers of the same repose, who sit together in the shade of the tree, by the plash of the fountain, with the glare of the desert round us and no great vice that I know but the habit perhaps of estimating people a little too much by what they think of a certain style.'"

"I'm afraid I don't know that sentence, but I'm sure Malcolm would have."

"Beyond doubt," I said. "But then Malcolm and I, as I say, belonged to the same club. The madness of art, or at least the madness of the worship of art, and all that. You may be better off without it."

BACK AT the Huntington Hotel, with clean San Francisco light coming in the windows of my corner room, I slipped Malcolm Gaynor's large manuscript out of its manila envelope, ordered lunch from room service—a hamburger and a half-bottle of white wine and a carafe of coffee, $62 with tip—and began to read. I finished at eleven that evening, amazed at how far Malcolm had gone

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not only in reinventing himself (in the current cant phrase) but in convincing himself of the reality of his invention.

The memoir was written in a style all too reminiscent of the Master's last, major phase, with long looping circumambient sentences laden with a heavy cargo of subordinate clauses and qualifying phrases. This elaborate style allowed Malcolm nicely to bury Max Goldstein and all his Jewish ancestors. In the memoir, he became a man of the world, a European if of no known country, a *flâneur* coming out of nowhere, a disembodied sensibility wandering among the cultural monuments and literature of the West. Nothing was said of Malcolm's difficult years as the son of Jewish parents—his father, I was later to learn, had been a tailor—growing up on Notre Dame Street in Montreal; next to nothing about his days as a left-wing journalist, working for *PM*, the New York daily, covering strikes in New England; about his first wife, Marsha (née Mutchnik), not a word. A more complete job of erasure could scarcely be imagined.

What, I asked myself, was going on? Was it from the Master that Malcolm derived the need to eliminate Max? Implicit in reading every great author is the question of what *he*, the writer, would think of *me*, his reader. Did Malcolm sense that Max would never pass muster with the Master? (Muster with the Master. "I'm coming over from Dover," the Master once wrote in a letter to a friend, adding, "Over from Dover—what a language!") A case could be made that the Master was an anti-Semite—not a major-league one, perhaps, but a player nonetheless. In one of his famous stories, a family of social climbers are described thus: "as good-natured as Jews before clothing-shops." Although he took the right line on the Dreyfus Affair, when he returned to the United States in 1904 after a long separation the Master did not hesitate to express his fear that the hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants now crowding New York would defile the purity of his beloved English language. Malcolm's—my—ancestors could have been among those immigrants.

Almost all my cultural heroes, it now occurred to me, bore the stain of Jew-hating, if not Jew-baiting. Working backward, there was T. S. Eliot, with his wretched lower-case jew squatting on the window sill, his Bleistein with the cigar; Virginia Woolf, who kept a cold spot in her heart for just about every Jew she ever met, despite having married one; Oscar Wilde, who, being cared for on his deathbed by his devoted friend Reggie Turner, at one point expostulated, "There, there, that will do, my little Jew"; Dickens, with his altogether too vivid figure of Fagin; then Edward Gibbon, who reports the murder of the 14th-century Roman leader Cola di Rienzi, his dead body abandoned outside the gates of Rome "to the dogs, to the Jews, and to the flames." And loop back to Shakespeare, the main man—the Franchise, as a black student of mine once referred to him in class—who gave us Shylock, the deadliest portrayal of a Jew yet.

What did we Jewish academics know of such men? For that matter, what could the various Howes, Kazins, Levins, Ellmanns, Blooms, Kaplans, Gaynor-Goldsteins, and others really know about Melville, Adams, Twain, Hardy, Joyce, Emerson, Lawrence, and the rest? We could make them seem more familiar, put them through our own dramas of alienation, anticapitalism, Freudianism, and other intellectual dipsy-doos, but was this to understand them, or was it to turn them into a species of Jews themselves?

As for Malcolm's memoir, which toward the middle I began to skim, it was, as his wife suggested, too far from complete to be published as a book. But maybe I could get a portion or two of it run in, say, the *Virginia Quarterly* or the *Georgia Review*, where I had connections. I would report this to Angela Gaynor, hoping to soften her up a bit as part of my campaign to part her from the Master's ring.

That night, having fallen asleep with the television on, I had one of my infrequent dreams about losing teeth. But this time, instead of my own teeth coming loose, the Master's green ring fell from my mouth, in multiple copies. What were they doing there, I wondered, and why hadn't I choked on them? I awoke in a sweat, turned off the television set—it was 2:38 on the bedside digital clock—and managed to get back to sleep.

"I HAVE to be candid," I said to Angela the next morning on the patio. "I don't think there's a market for Malcolm's memoirs as a book. I do think, though, that I can arrange to cut out a section or two that might interest a few literary magazines. There won't be much money, but it will keep your husband's name before the public."

"That's fine with me," she said. "Malcolm named me as his literary executor, and I'm not sure, really, what my responsibilities are."

"I'd say they include doing all you can to protect his reputation, promote his work, and see that no one rips you off by using his writing without an acknowledgment or a fee."

"You make it sound so easy. To someone as deep in the woods as I am, it's very confusing. Do you suppose I could call on you for help from time to time?" She

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was wearing a salmon-colored blouse that did fine things for her skin, and she seemed even more fetching when asking for help. Her posture, sitting on a metal ice-cream chair, was perfect, her hands exquisite, the fingers long and perfectly formed, her nails bearing a coat of clear polish. She wore a small round watch with a leather strap, and was utterly at ease in the world. Old Malcolm must have taken the keenest pleasure just in gazing upon her.

"Of course," I said. "I'll be happy to help in any way you wish. Whenever you feel troubled about anything to do with any of this, pick up the phone and call."

"I'm very grateful," she said, looking genuinely appreciative. If we were in a story by Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, or Philip Roth, I thought, this was when I would make my move on the widow. I remember once discussing these writers in correspondence with Malcolm, who remarked, his Freudianism combining nicely with his Jewish self-hatred, that he assumed they'd all grown up in small, crowded apartments that provided a fertile ground for the development of Oedipal complexes, leaving them all a little sex-crazed.

"Oh, one other thing, Professor Shapiro."

"Arnold, please."

"Arnold. I've discovered some notebooks of Malcolm's that go back a long way, to the early 1930's, actually. They have handwritten entries that I've tried to read but without much success. There are six of them. Do you have time?"

"I can make time, Mrs. Gaynor."

"Angela," she corrected me, with a smile.

When I left that morning I had under my arm Malcolm's diary—six black-and-white student notebooks with thick, falsely marbleized covers.

I BEGAN reading on the plane back to Detroit and finished the next morning in my office at Ann Arbor. Written in a small, not easily legible hand, they began in 1928, when Malcolm was twenty, and like the diaries and journals of many young men and women were much given to expressing anguish over the failure of the world to recognize their author's genius. But in this case there was a difference: Malcolm intended to do something about it.

From these diaries I learned that Malcolm, or rather Max, had been the first person in his family to attend a university, and over his father's objections (his mother goes unmentioned). Unlike the standard Jewish immigrant, eager to see his son advance in the new world through education, Oscar Goldstein preferred that Max not, in the words of the youthful diarist, "overstep himself." Although he did not expect him to become a tailor, he foresaw something solid in retailing. What did a Jew need from literature?, the old man asked. The diary records harsh conversations between these two small unbending men (as I imagine them), neither giving an inch.

Max, determined to study what he wished, went to McGill, though he continued to live in the family's two-bedroom apartment with his two sisters and an older brother. Since his father wouldn't contribute a penny to his education, he worked long hours at odd jobs—as a milkman's assistant, a bellboy at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, a woman's shoe salesman. During his four years at McGill, he never once talked about his life at the university in his father's presence.

It was the university that put paid to whatever ties Max retained to Judaism. They had never been very strong to begin with. The religion was a mystery to him, a dark and dampening one. Although the Goldsteins adhered to a Jewish diet, and lit candles on Friday night, there was no spiritual side to any of it, at least none that Max, reporting in his diary, could see. When he was a boy, his father had taken the family for a week's holiday to a place called Kutenberg's in the Laurentian mountains. Max, eight years old at the time, was fishing with baited hook and string at a small creek when he heard a frightful double-cackling sound, half beast, half human. Turning, he looked up the hill and saw an unshaven man in a yarmulke muttering a prayer before slitting the necks of chickens—one after another—and tossing them into the high grass where they would do a death cackle, some forcing themselves into a last apoplectic leap before expiring.

That, Max decided, was Judaism: scary and squalid, noisy and nauseating. The point of it all was lost on him—the more so since, as his diary also records, he had seen older Jews taunted and even kicked by French-Canadian boys. What he remembered from such scenes was a feeling of terror, terror at the thought that someday something similar could happen to him.

There was a small clutch of Jews at McGill in Max's time, admitted on a strict quota. They felt pleased to be there even as they remained outside the main life of the university. Except for those intent on a career in law or medicine, they tended to be bohemian, left-wing, iconoclastic. They mocked Canada, their philistine, business-minded parents, religion, everything that passed for bourgeois. Max took up with this crowd, entered into its general outlook. He did very well at school, so well that he

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determined to do graduate study, possibly to teach afterward. Yet when he proposed the idea to Ian MacGregor, the professor with whom he had done a tutorial on Tennyson, the old gentleman crushed his hopes under the guise of candor. I quote from Max's diary:

> "Mr. Goldstein," he said, "there is no question of your aptitude and affinity for the literature of England. But, I must be honest with you, I don't think your services as a teacher of the subject are likely to be wanted. Leastways not in North America. Not for a man of your religious persuasion [Max had underlined the last word]. I don't say it is fair, but it is the way it is, at any rate for the present, and not likely soon to change. I'd look for another way of going about things, if I were you, my boy."

Not long after, Max committed this thought to his diary:

> Anton Chekhov wrote that it is extremely difficult "to squeeze the slave out of oneself." I must find a way to squeeze the Jew out of myself. Why be hobbled by the detractions implicit in a religion in which I neither believe nor to which I feel the least affinity? I must find a way out, and as soon as possible. I shall not breathe freely until I do.

Max was twenty-one when he wrote that. I don't know his biography in sufficient detail to say when, precisely, he changed his name, but by the time I met him, his speech had become correct, careful, clipped, and his accent, which he had somehow made mid-Atlantic, betrayed nothing of his origins. I suspect that many people took him for an Englishman, which is to say, a Gentile to the highest power. By the time I knew him, he had thoroughly Malcolmized himself.

Reading these distraught diaries, I suppose I came to despise the life of Malcolm. Whatever one thought of the worship-of-art club, the club of Jewishness, especially in the 20th century, was one from which it seemed to me truly dishonorable to resign. Not that I was in a superior moral position here: although I wasn't hiding my own Jewishness, I was greatly ignorant of my religion, and my own wife, the mother of my two daughters, wasn't Jewish. So who was I to knock a twice-dead Max Goldstein for turning himself into Malcolm Gaynor?

And yet I did knock him, to myself at least, on that scoreboard we all keep to judge the way others we know have met life and its challenges. In discarding Max, Malcolm was posted on my scoreboard as a sellout. But then—I remonstrated with myself, going back and forth—into Jewishness Max/Malcolm had never really bought. Besides, so far as I knew, he had never denied he was Jewish; he just didn't, so to speak, lead with it. He refashioned himself, did an ethnic makeover. What was it my business?, as my mother would have said.

My mother, it now occurred to me, was Malcolm's exact contemporary, both having been born in 1908. Unlike him, however, she, without the least scintilla of literary or any other overlay of culture, was utterly untroubled in her Jewishness. The thought of trying to "pass" was beyond her imagining. She was, of course, vividly aware of the world's anti-Semitism; we never went by a neighborhood, country club, or restaurant during my youth in Chicago without her noting whether it was or was not "restricted." She had no real Jewish education, she was not synagogue-going, she did not keep kosher. But in every way she was perfectly, contentedly, really quite happily Jewish.

But then my mother also accepted the world as she found it, whereas the young Max Goldstein did not. For him, that world, so long as his place in it was that of a Jew, was a blight. Or, more precisely, his own Jewishness blighted Max's world. And since, he figured, it was a blight easily enough removed, why not remove it? His ambitions, after all, were wider, higher, than my mother's. They were ambitions upon which his Jewish birth was a drag—and a drag with no discernible purpose or meaning. Better to cut it loose.

Was *that* right, though? Where did it all begin, and where end? I thought of the ancestors of Spinoza, who had risked their lives to perform the rituals of prayer, diet, and circumcision about which Max/Malcolm Goldstein/Gaynor wished he'd never heard. And then I thought about that much greater number who had their lives taken away from them not for practicing these rituals themselves but because their ancestors had done so. I had never felt comfortable talking about the massacre of the Jews of Europe. It was too large, too gruesome; and besides, talking about it seemed to me to be drawing on a moral credit that wasn't really mine to draw on. Yet, somehow, it, too, made resigning from this club into all the greater a betrayal. In a small but personally significant way, it let the bastards win, and that could not be permitted.

Had none of these things occurred to the young Max Goldstein? To be fair, he probably changed his name before the European massacre became an

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event in history. At some point in the late 1930's, I would guess, he had turned Max into Malcolm, Goldstein into Gaynor. Was he relieved to feel the burden of his Jewishness fall from him? Did he sense that he could now soar into the universal empyrean? Did he feel joy? No one would ever know. The diaries were blank on the subject. The mature Malcolm never wrote about Jewish writers, and apart from his interest in psychoanalysis he seemed successfully to have rinsed the Jew out of his prose style. Did he ever look back? Have any regrets? Was he a happier man without the heavy historical cargo of his ancestry? This, too, could not be known.

WHAT I did know was that I owed a letter to Angela Gaynor. In it I said that I thought there might be some interest in her husband's papers at the University of Tulsa, where they were buying up the papers of lots of American and English writers, sometimes paying extravagant sums. To judge from other purchases, they might offer $150,000 or so for Malcolm's manuscripts and letters. I volunteered to contact the appropriate person.

As for the notebooks that I still had in my possession, these, I told Angela, could do her husband's reputation no good. If I were she, I would burn them. I reminded her that the Master himself, in 1910, six years before his death, had a jolly little conflagration in the backyard of his house in which he put to flame what had been estimated as several thousand letters he wanted no one ever to see. If she had any questions about any of this, she was to call me back.

Four days later, as I came home from teaching an afternoon class, my wife told me that Mrs. Gaynor was on the phone. Without removing my jacket I picked up the telephone in the kitchen.

"Hello, Arnold," she said. "Your letter arrived this morning. Very helpful."

I imagined her in her Larkin Street palazzo, Malcolm's grand lady of the summer afternoon.

"I'm glad, Angela," I said. "Do you want me to contact Tulsa for you?"

"Please," she said. "And about Malcolm's notebooks? Do you still have them?"

"I do."

"May I ask you to burn them for me?"

"Of course," I said.

"Arnold, I can't tell you how helpful all this has been to me. I'd like it very much if you would accept, as a token of your help and your friendship to Malcolm, the green ring you seemed to like so much."

I hesitated. I swallowed. I heard myself say: "That is very kind of you, Angela, but I think I have to say no. That ring was Malcolm's. He somehow earned it, and might even be said to have paid staggeringly high for it. I couldn't wear it, or even have it around the house, thinking how much his devotion to the Master cost Malcolm. But I thank you, I thank you with all my heart."

"I won't press you," she said. "But please know that I'm very grateful."

"I'm even more grateful to you," I said, realizing afterward that this remark could not possibly make sense to her.

That same afternoon, in the cool Michigan autumn, a mug of coffee in my hand, I went out to the backyard and placed Malcolm's six notebooks in the wire trash basket near the grill. The pages burned easily, but the thick covers took a while and made a great deal of smoke. Standing there waiting, I had second thoughts about the ring. I still wanted it, though I also knew it was very important that I not have it. Watching the smoke curl into the air, poking at the fire, sipping my coffee, I thought of the Master. Had he been here just now, reading my mind with his characteristically astonishing percipience, he would no doubt smile, perhaps less than distinctly but, to adopt his own penchant for the adverbial, subtly, amusedly, ever so Cheshirely.

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OBSERVATIONS

Still "Bowling Alone"?

Leslie Lenkowsky

LAST YEAR, Americans donated over $190 billion to charity, gave roughly 20 billion hours of their time as volunteers, and participated in nearly 2 million tax-exempt organizations, not to mention the still greater number of less formal groups through which they performed an astonishing range of public-spirited works. Indeed, except for a minor dip in the early 1990's, Americans have been giving and volunteering at an ever-increasing rate for over twenty years.

Yet despite this apparent vitality, all is far from well with civil society in America—or at least so argues the Harvard political scientist Robert D. Putnam in his much-talked-about new book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*.* By Putnam's lights, the United States is in fact suffering from a severe *breakdown* of civic and social ties, a development that is partly responsible not only for the public's heightened mistrust of government but even for the growing incidence of depression and suicide. Nor is this withdrawal from civic engagement something new: with the exception of older Americans, Putnam claims, it has been going on for more than 30 years.

How can two such different pictures be reconciled?

IT WAS the 19th-century French observer Alexis de Tocqueville who first suggested that voluntary associations in America had a value that went well beyond their own immediate goals. Such groups, he wrote, by taking on tasks that would otherwise have to be performed by government, kept the state from growing too powerful. More importantly, they taught those who participated in them both the norms of community life and the skills of cooperation necessary for sustaining a democratic society. In a phrase coined by the distinguished sociologist James S. Coleman, who devoted much of his career to developing Tocqueville's insight, associations helped people to acquire "social capital," a commodity every bit as valuable for getting ahead, Coleman maintained, as its more familiar financial counterpart.

Himself a strong proponent of this view, Putnam first sounded an alarm about the erosion of social capital in the United States in a 1995 article in the *Journal of Democracy*. Since the mid-1960's, he reported with distress, the membership rolls of a great variety of long-established groups—religious congregations, civic and fraternal orders, labor unions, the Boy Scouts, the Red Cross, parent-teacher associations (PTA's)—had steadily fallen. And as for the organizations whose ranks had actually grown during this time, many of them, like the American Association of Retired Persons, demanded little more involvement than the writing of a check. Even the country's less formal venues for socializing seemed threatened, Putnam suggested. The whimsical title of his article, "Bowling Alone," came from his discovery that fewer people were joining bowling leagues, a matter of no small concern to bowling-alley proprietors whose revenues depend heavily on the convivial sharing of beer and pretzels.

The article was an intellectual

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sensation, propelling its author to meetings with President Clinton and appearances on television and in the popular press. But it also attracted a stream of critics, most of whom took issue with Putnam's findings.

Of these the foremost was the late Everett Carll Ladd, a political scientist at the University of Connecticut. In a book-length response to Putnam published in 1999,* Ladd argued that American civic life was not in decline but rather was "churning." If PTA's had lost members, other school-centered parents' groups had sprung up in their stead. If mainline Protestant congregations had shrunk, evangelical denominations were experiencing a boom. Even the drop in bowling-league participation had been offset, Ladd noted, by a rise in the popularity of soccer clubs.

For Ladd, the individualism at the heart of the country's conception of citizenship gave Americans no alternative but to cooperate with one another. This being so, ebbs and flows in organizational membership should be seen as stemming not from any broad disaffection with civic groups or public life per se but from uncertainty about how best to work together during changing times. The very concern sparked by Putnam's lament was itself, Ladd suggested, a sign of America's still-abundant supply of social capital.

FIVE YEARS in the making, Putnam's new book is both a response to Ladd and other critics and an elaboration of his original thesis. Unleashing a torrent of new data, he presents a rich and comprehensive picture of associational life in the United States, one that seemingly clinches his case for the decline of civic engagement.

Yes, Putnam concedes, new parent-teacher organizations have come into existence; but the proportion of parents involved in them and in old-fashioned PTA's remains lower than it was at the beginning of the 1960's. Yes, new religious denominations are flourishing; but total church membership has dropped by about 10 percent in the past four decades, and church attendance even further. Nor is the pattern any different for clubs, labor unions, and political groups. As for sports, although soccer and other clubs have become more numerous, and bowling continues to attract young people as well as their elders, this has not been enough to offset declining participation in football and baseball—and fewer people of any age want to bowl in leagues.

Indeed, Americans are less involved in all sorts of once-commonplace social activities, from playing cards and visiting neighborhood bars to entertaining friends at home, and a diminishing share of families say that they even manage to eat dinner together. The groups Americans do join tend to be of the self-help variety, like Alcoholics Anonymous, which chiefly address personal problems rather than fostering social skills. Or they are cause-related organizations based on such things as opposition to abortion or concern for the environment, and thus either build upon preexisting social networks (like evangelical churches) or ask little of their supporters beyond money and an occasional letter to a public official. Only two or three of the major environmental groups, Putnam writes in direct response to one of Ladd's criticisms, even have local chapters.

Then there is charitable giving. Although it has risen substantially in absolute terms since the 1980's, it has not kept pace with the growth of American incomes, which suggests that the nation has become not more but less generous. Putnam agrees that volunteering has been on the rise, but here too appearances are deceiving: most of the new activity reflects the involvement of members of the World War-II generation who are retiring earlier and healthier and who possess, he speculates, a uniquely strong sense of civic obligation.

AS PUTNAM well knows, civic life in the United States has always had its ups and downs. By his own account, concerns over the health of American society ran high in the early decades of the 20th century, as Progressive reformers worried about assimilating a flood of immigrants. Even in the decade after World War II—a period touted by Putnam for its social-mindedness—critics pointed ominously to the rise of the rootless "mass man" and bemoaned the lack of real community in the bedroom suburbs built to house returning veterans and their families.

Still, for Putnam, it is only since the advent of the baby boomers that a truly dramatic change for the worse has occurred. "For the first two-thirds of the 20th century," he writes, "a powerful tide bore Americans into ever deeper engagement in the life of their communities." But over the last three decades, "[w]ithout at first noticing, we have been pulled apart from one another and from our communities."

What happened? Putnam fingers a number of possible culprits: suburban sprawl, time-and-money pressures, the increased number of women in the work force. Each, in his view, has played a role; but the most devastating solvent of all in American civic life, he believes, has been television, especially of the escapist variety.

By taking time away from community activities, "desensitizing" habitual viewers to reality, and glorifying materialism over public and social values, the flickering images that now dominate so many American living rooms account, by Putnam's calculation, for as much as 25 percent of the drop-off in associational ties. For individual citizens, he guesses that every additional hour of television watched each day translates into a 10-percent decline in "most forms of civic activism." "At the very least," he concludes, "television and its electronic cousins are willing accomplices in the civic

* *The Ladd Report.* Free Press, 192 pp., $25.00.

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mystery we have been unraveling, and more likely than not, they are ringleaders."

HAS PUTNAM succeeded in answering his critics? To a large extent, he has. But a few caveats are in order. To begin with, his statistics frequently exaggerate the degree of decline over the years. Thus, rather than comparing the actual memberships of the PTA or the Boy Scouts in 1960 to their actual memberships today, he adjusts the figures to take into account the proportion of *eligible* boys or parents in a much larger pool. If an association's growth has not kept pace with the relevant population, he deems it to have "lost" members—even if it has gained. This, to my mind, is a stretch.

Nor are today's communities really being "pulled apart" in the fashion suggested by Putnam's imposing charts and graphs. Organized labor, for instance, has certainly had a tough time of it since the late 1970's, when it counted some 20 million members. But the movement's 16 million current members are nothing to sneeze at, and hardly signal an organizational catastrophe. Once again, unfortunately, such impressive absolute numbers—as opposed to figures showing mere percentage changes—are hard to find in *Bowling Alone*.

This is not to say, however, that Putnam is wrong in his basic picture. Though the baby boomers and their progeny still have many years ahead of them in which to deepen their civic commitments—they will enjoy long retirements, after all, and inherit trillions of dollars—there can be no doubt that they are not nearly as engaged with their communities as the dwindling generation of Americans who came of age during and immediately after World War II. Given the weight of habit and tradition, Americans are unlikely to abandon associational activities any time soon, but those activities will continue to matter less than they once did, both to individuals and to society at large.

The question remains why. In his explanation of how we reached this state of affairs, Putnam probably underestimates some factors and overestimates others. Changes in the country's industrial structure, for example, may have played a greater role in the downturn of labor unions than he concedes, and he pays too little attention to geographic shifts, particularly the population explosion during the past 30 years in the South and Far West, regions historically less hospitable to civic associations. Nor does he sufficiently credit changes in the tax code, whose lower marginal rates, and thus weaker incentives for giving, have probably contributed to the failure of charitable contributions to keep up with rising incomes.

And television? Putnam's grand claim in this regard has some plausibility; not only has there been a remarkable rise in viewership in recent decades, but numerous studies do document the passivity and social disengagement of regular watchers. And yet, as Putnam himself recognizes, none of this establishes that television *caused* our civic woes; its popularity may, rather, be a result of those woes.

Instructive in this regard is the example of the World War-II generation, which also grew up under the sway of a new and potentially hypnotic form of electronic entertainment: radio. As in the case of television, the advent of radio was greeted by fears that it would exercise too much control over its listeners; the loudspeaker even became a symbol of totalitarian authority. Yet the spread of the radio into virtually every American home hardly kept listeners from socializing or taking part in the affairs of their communities. To the contrary, its introduction coincided with an almost unprecedented burst of civic activity.

ACCORDING TO Putnam, still another difference separates Americans raised during the Depression and World War II from those who came of age in the 1960's and afterward: the latter, he writes, have lacked "great collective events" to bolster their civic identities. This gets closer to the truth, but should be rephrased: what really sets the eras apart is not the recent lack of grand events but rather their new and troubling character.

Unlike the massive economic downturn and the global conflict weathered by the previous generation, the defining moments in American life over the past 30 years—the cold war, the civil-rights movement, the rise of the youth culture, feminism—are notable for their divisiveness. Instead of reaffirming common values, they often pitted sharply divergent norms against each other. Rather than reinforcing existing community standards, they frequently denigrated and challenged them. By now, the ongoing "culture war" produced by these conflicts has reached into every corner of American society, and nowhere more damagingly than in our associational life.

This, indeed, is a central theme of Robert Wuthnow's *Loose Connections: Joining Together in America's Fragmented Communities* (1998),* a book that has, regrettably, received much less attention than *Bowling Alone*. As Wuthnow shows, over the last three decades, civic and voluntary groups of every kind have been transformed in the name of one or another vision of social progress. As, for example, women sought to enter the professional world, the clubs in which they had formerly participated either embraced the new feminist agenda or, more often, simply fell by the wayside. At the same time, civil-rights laws and court decisions restricted the freedom of men's clubs like the Jaycees and Rotarians to choose their own members, with scant concern for what this might mean for their survival. Churches and synagogues followed suit, altering their doctrines,

* Harvard University Press, 276 pp., $35.00.

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clergy, and even membership requirements in order to be more "inclusive," all the while losing much of their coherence, and their appeal, as social units.

Nor is the story any different for the larger institutions of the public square. Once Lyndon Johnson's Great Society was put in place, many nonprofit organizations converted themselves into delivery vehicles for government services, in the process becoming more reliant on professional leadership and less in need of volunteers and contributions. In the wake of campus upheavals, universities accommodated the demands of newly assertive faculty and students by setting aside many of their traditional rules and academic programs. In the name of greater democracy, political parties, too, adopted various reforms that, even as they took authority away from tight-knit groups of insiders, turned the parties themselves into fluid associations of voters, united only by a passing interest in candidates.

What such changes had in common, Wuthnow contends, is that they placed personal needs—rather than a sense of obligation to a particular community—at the center of civic participation. Joining a group became more a matter of individual fulfillment than an expectation of life in society, and leaving a group no longer presented the same dilemma as when it meant severing ties that defined one's identity.

In Wuthnow's judgment, it is the very "looseness" of these connections that has enabled many associations to survive and even grow. But the same looseness would also seem to go a long way toward explaining why the baby-boom generation has been so disappointing in terms of its civic and social engagement. By demanding less of their members and relying more on professionals and government, today's civic groups may have successfully adapted to the challenges presented by the culture war, but the costs have been very high. With certain notable exceptions (evangelical Christian groups and inner-city crime patrols, for example), America's associations command less loyalty, are more difficult to lead, and, with commitment to the group seldom outweighing members' commitment to themselves, engender less and less trust.

Though he is not always clear about how and why it has happened, Robert Putnam is, alas, right: many more of us are living off social capital, many fewer of us are replenishing it. Changing that reality will require a great deal more, on the part of individuals and groups alike, than a reduction in the number of hours spent in front of the television set.

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Observations

Culinary Correctness

Steven A. Shaw

When Alain Ducasse, the world's preeminent French chef, announced early this year that he would be opening an eponymous restaurant in New York's Essex House, it was a cause for excitement among connoisseurs and curiosity seekers alike. By the time the 65-seat restaurant lit its stoves in late June, it had amassed a waiting list of 2,700 names—many of them customers of Ducasse's restaurants in Europe—and was the most sought-after reservation in the history of New York. Nor, apparently, was anyone deterred by the prices, even though ADNY (as it is called) was to be the most expensive American restaurant ever, with appetizers as high as $50, entrées reaching $80, and tasting menus at $160 per person.

What you would receive for your money, as I saw for myself when I visited the restaurant on its second night of business, was a level of Gilded Age luxury never before available on these shores, at least not all in one place. Next to each female guest, a stool is placed upon which to rest her purse. A dedicated waiter presents six varieties of bottled water. You get a new napkin, handled with fork and spoon, whenever you leave and return to the table. Another, smaller napkin is distributed for dessert. To eat your squab, you choose from a selection of bamboo-handled, handmade knives. In the French style, tables are well illuminated to enable you to see the menu, the food, your friends, and, for better or worse, the check, which you sign by selecting from an array of Cartier, Mont Blanc, Gucci, and Caran d'Ache pens.

The table is yours for the evening, as is the case at most Michelin-starred restaurants in Europe, so you always feel indulged rather than rushed. The wine list is not presented until after you have ordered. Coffees are proffered after dessert—that is, after the first dessert. You also get handmade chocolates and macaroons, followed by ice cream and sorbet served from a tableside gueridon. Then, a gigantic post-post-dessert cart comes around with a dizzying display of house-made candies. If you order verbena tea to wrap things up, a white-gloved waiter appears with a live verbena plant and a pair of scissors.

My first meal, à la carte, was a simple affair: Ducasse, the world's most dynamic and successful chef, is known for understatement, and I focused on the signature dishes of his two European fine-dining restaurants, Louis XV in Monte Carlo and Alain Ducasse in Paris. But within a few days I returned as the guest of a friend and we ordered a multicourse tasting menu. It consisted of an *amuse bouche* of sea scallops topped with Iranian caviar and then a progression of Santa Barbara prawns, Hudson Valley foie gras, Alaskan halibut, and Arizona artisanal beef, all with elaborate tableside presentation, followed by an insanely decadent dessert containing more varieties of chocolate than I could keep track of.

I looked forward to my third visit.

Then the reviews started coming in.

First, the *New York Times* critic, William Grimes, in a "preview" of the restaurant after one visit, spoke deprecatingly of the high prices and the difficulty of securing a reserva-

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tion. His praise for the food was faint, while with regard to everything else he maintained an attitude of detached amusement, withholding final judgment (he wrote) until he would have a chance to return more than once in the future.

Grimes's decorum gave way, in the *New York Post*'s Steve Cuozzo, to anger. Calling ADNY "the most arrogantly launched eatery in the history of the world," Cuozzo wrote scathingly that "globe-girdling Alain Ducasse means to tap Manhattan's cash gusher while it lasts, and ADNY is the mediocre, often comical result." He dismissed the luxury appointments as "gimmickry," the food as "middle-of-the-road classic."

In Rebecca Ascher-Walsh's review in *Fortune*, anger gave way to rage:

> Dante, have we got news for you: there's now a new circle of hell. At Alain Ducasse at the Essex House, you'll see grownups spitting food into napkins, you'll bite into bread so burned you'd think Freddy Krueger [the knife-fingered slasher in the horror movie *A Nightmare on Elm Street*] were running the kitchen, and you'll experience the thrill of frogs legs and chicken wings fighting their way down your gullet like a kung-fu master.

Although the estimable Gael Greene of *New York* magazine stepped back a bit, in her own account of no fewer than five meals at ADNY she pronounced only one worthwhile, concluding triumphantly, in the name of her fellow New Yorkers, "we're not so easily fooled." This same theme was echoed in scores of other media outlets. Ducasse was lambasted for arrogance and French-style culinary imperialism; for exhibiting a corporate mentality, manifested above all in his frequent absences from ADNY itself; for the pretentiousness of his restaurant's appointments; for those prices; and, finally, for ADNY's unremarkable food. In a piece a month later summing up the worldwide negative press reaction, Marian Burros, the grand dame of the *New York Times* food staff, wrote:

> The doors opened, and everything seemed to go wrong. The food world buzzed about the disappointing cooking and the absentee chef. Endless stories mocked the $500 tabs, the wine list with some bottles marked up 1,000 percent, and the goofy dining-room rituals like the presentation of a selection of knives with every squab and a choice of expensive pens for signing the check. The coverage went from bad to worse. . . .

To date, there has not been a single favorable review of ADNY in the mainstream culinary media.

WHEN THE world's top chef opens a restaurant in New York City only to be met by a critical chorus of Bronx cheers, something is clearly going on. Can the critics possibly be right?

Let us begin with the charge of arrogance. There is little debate that Alain Ducasse is, in fact, the world's greatest chef, or that he is currently at the top of his form. To put it in a nutshell, he is the only chef of our generation to operate simultaneously two restaurants that have earned three Michelin stars, while another two of his establishments—he has eleven altogether—boast one star apiece, making him history's only eight-star chef.

Ducasse's story itself is straight from central casting. Born in 1956 to goose farmers in southwestern France, he began his first kitchen apprenticeship at the age of sixteen before being formally educated at the Bordeaux school of hotel and catering management and embarking on his climb to greatness under such masters as Michel Guérard, Gaston Lenôtre, Roger Verge, and Alain Chapel. By 1987, Ducasse had achieved the position of executive chef at the Hôtel de Paris in Monaco; in 1996, he opened Restaurant Alain Ducasse in Paris.

Today, Ducasse's global empire includes, in addition to his fine-dining establishments, a chain of casual restaurants plus a cooking school, country inns, and a line of tableware and gourmet products. Given his success, nobody could fault him for displaying a high degree of self-confidence. But arrogance? Cultural imperialism? Ducasse has called New York "undoubtedly the most spectacular restaurant city due to its synthesis of international cultures"—no small compliment from a Michelin three-star chef. He is also passionate about American ingredients. If his desire to meld the best of French technique with the best of American ingredients constitutes arrogance, it is arrogance of a most peculiar sort.

By all accounts, Ducasse is one of the hardest-working chefs in history. He could easily rest on his laurels; with eight Michelin stars to his credit, it may be a century before anyone achieves a comparable level of eminence. He also had little to gain and much to lose by opening place in New York, a notorious pit for restaurateurs with grand designs. It was not arrogance but rather idealism, in the form of a lifelong commitment to the cause of fine dining—as well, of course, as the ambition to succeed—that led Ducasse into this venture.

It is true that, these days, Ducasse is more likely to be seen in a suit than in chef's whites. It is also true that at ADNY, your chances of ever eating a bite of food prepared by Ducasse's own hands are as slim as your chances of getting an 8 o'clock reservation on Friday night. But to imagine that things might be otherwise—at *any* major restaurant—is to evince a distressing degree of ignorance.

Chefs know how to cook, but they are not cooks—in New York, most cooks are Latin immigrants. Nor is a chef the kitchen overseer—that is what the sous-chef is for. Chefs are, rather, executives, their role akin to that of an old-style artist

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presiding over a school of apprentices. They conceptualize and outline the work, leaving the detail and toil to the crew. The real test of a chef's greatness is not how well he cooks, but how well the kitchen runs when he is not around. The world's best chef is the one who has rendered himself the most dispensable.

In this respect, the taunting of Ducasse for his absences from ADNY—"maybe," cracked William Grimes, "he does not want to hear the screams of anguish when the checks arrive"—is utterly off the mark. Ducasse's man in Manhattan, Didier Elena, who has been his colleague for twelve years, has superior qualifications to 99 percent of American chefs who own their own restaurants.

As for ADNY's shameless luxuriousness—"I tripped over the damn things twice," complained the *Post*'s Steve Cuozzo about the purse stools, while Gael Greene scoffed at the selections of knives and pens as "vulgar" and *USA Today* derided the multihour length of a meal at ADNY as a "New York no-no"—the fact is that, though it can be precious at times, ADNY is positively unstuffy, and a meal there is great fun. It is only at copycat French restaurants in New York and London that the waiters seek to intimidate; at ADNY, as in the best restaurants in France, the staff is much less formal and much more engaging than caricature would suggest.

Contrary to the misreporting of the *Times*, moreover, there are not 55 waiters for 65 customers at Ducasse but 55 staff members altogether, including eighteen dining-room staff. It is also patently untrue, as the Associated Press bizarrely contended, that "Each time you sip water or wine, a hand reaches around and makes sure the glasses of all at the table are level." My own experience, corroborated by that of other diners, is that ADNY's appointments trigger sensations not of contempt but of delight. To be waited on hand and foot, to be freed simply to enjoy oneself, is the realization of a fantasy. Only someone with a serious axe to grind would call it an affront.

Is ADNY worth the money—between $100 and $160 per person for food alone? That, I would say, depends on how much money you have, and what you are getting for it.

Luxury exists because people want it, cost what it will, even if that cost seems totally out of proportion to inherent value. Luckily, the necessities of life, at least in the U.S., do not carry such price tags; but for everything else, what is the crime in letting supply and demand set the market? True, there may be diminishing returns—often, the objective difference in quality between the best and the very good is minimal, while the price margin can be vast. But for those who both appreciate and can afford the best, there is no contest.

As it happens, given ADNY's single sitting and five-day-a-week schedule (which allows the same kitchen brigade to be on duty at all times), it is not clear how Ducasse plans to make money even at these prices. The top New York restaurants currently charge $125 for their tasting menus; Ducasse charges $160, which is roughly what it costs to dine at the three-star level in France, even at today's favorable exchange rate. For that extra $35, you get your table for the whole night and an unrivaled level of service and luxury.*

And you get the food, the objections to which are the most peculiar part of the whole story.

For every single dish, Ducasse has acquired absolutely the best ingredients available in America. *New York* magazine quoted one of his purveyors:

> Alain wants the foie gras wrapped in parchment, delivered on ice, not vacuum-packed. The most expensive squabs, strangled. Organic chickens air-chilled with the feet on. I had to get special permission from the FDA. It's costing him double the usual price. They [ADNY] are the most focused, the most demanding.

New York's point here may have been to mock, but the beneficiary of this fastidiousness is the diner. And the same extraordinary care extends not just to the ingredients but to every detail of preparation and presentation. Thus, the Arizona beef, better than that at Peter Luger, New York's justly celebrated steakhouse, is served with chanterelles, artichokes, and a stew of braised short ribs, sauced with a flawless *jus*, and offered with a pickle-and-mustard-flavored cold salad on the side. A tremendous halibut dish comes on three plates. The central plate holds (barely) an immense brick of poached halibut—the best I have had—sitting atop a spinach, watercress, and Champagne purée, while a second plate contains a sea-urchin royale topped with a dessert-like emulsion that positively explodes with flavor, and plate number three provides a briny counterpoint in the form of a mixed seaweed salad.

The list of wonderful dishes goes on and on: a firm, chilled Maine lobster tail thinly sliced lengthwise and crowned with a ginger salsa; foie gras served over apple confit and topped with raw apples sliced at the table; gorgeous sea scallops, just barely heated and topped with Iranian caviar. In every case, Ducasse's way with the food is based on a tremendous facility with culinary history, ingredients, and equipment, while his recipes, juxtaposing flavor, texture, and temperature, and reflecting his rather cerebral understanding of what makes a successful meal, remind one in their intricacy of a Bach fugue. This may, indeed, be what prompted Gael Greene to complain that Ducasse's approach is

* Ducasse's prices have also been exaggerated for effect. If the *Times* reviewer spent $1,500 on dinner for four, he must have ordered $600 worth of wine. My own dinner for four, with about $200 worth of wine, ran to $930 before the tip.

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"too intellectual, too contrived," and that his food "has no emotion." But, just as when it is applied to the music of Bach, the complaint lacks all substance.

To be sure, the ADNY kitchen has produced a few duds. The succulent Santa Barbara prawns are overwhelmed by a thick citrus sauce—here, the counterpoint is out of whack—and wild albino salmon from Alaska is similarly overwhelmed by its garnish. There is also the occasional cooking error. But these minor flaws, to be expected in an infant restaurant—ADNY was only a few weeks old when most of the reviews came in—pale beside the triumphs. Already America's finest restaurant, ADNY will likely soon be America's best.

WHAT, THEN, explains the collective animus?

In the days when the late Craig Claiborne was at the *Times*, restaurant reviewers were culled from the ranks of trained culinary professionals and self-educated gourmets. Today, they are more likely to be journalists doing a job. As William Grimes candidly describes his own qualifications, "I'm an amateur eater who's turned pro."

To his credit, Grimes has generally acquitted himself well. But many of today's reviewers are fundamentally incapable even of *recognizing* the phenomenon that ADNY represents, much less appreciating it. With little sense of how to judge true French professional service, they have reacted to the restaurant's occasional excesses with confused hostility; without a clear understanding of ingredients or basic technique, they have mistaken subtlety and understatement for mediocrity. The same drop in standards that, in culinary instruction, has taken us from Julia Child and Jacques Pepin to Bobby Flay and the Iron Chefs has infected the world of food criticism as well, where a commitment to professional excellence and devotion to the enterprise have given way to sensationalism and a sometimes truculent ignorance.

Or to politics. Although the process has taken a while, restaurant reviewing has at last caught up with critical fashions in art, music, and literature. The spirit of deconstruction is now everywhere in the air. Just as, in the nation's English departments, comic books have been declared to be on a par with Shakespeare or Jane Austen, so, too, in the nation's food press, the entire enterprise of fine dining is in the process of being leveled and "demystified," the high pulled down, the low raised up. In recent pieces on New York's two most Michelin-like restaurants, Lespinasse and Cello, Jonathan Gold, the new reviewer for *Gourmet* magazine, excoriated the former for, of all things, its jacket-and-tie requirement and the latter for being "too correct." On another front, William Grimes and others have taken up the cause of iceberg lettuce, portraying it as a veritable blue-collar hero threatened by pretentious, aristocratic greens (i.e., the ones with flavor) like arugula.

From this point of view, it is hardly surprising that the critics should have been thrown into paroxysms of neopopulist indignation over the prices and appointments at ADNY, or that the *Daily News*'s list of what else you can buy for $500 included "one-thousand-sixty-four White Castle hamburgers." And as if this display of egalitarian fervor by some of society's best-paid sybarites were not enough, added to it was a generous dollop of good old-fashioned Francophobia, with one paper expressing its mawkish concern for "easily led [American] minds, reduced to aspic by the whisper of Ducasse's name."

WHETHER THE critics succeed in putting ADNY out of business remains to be seen. If so, however, it will be a victory greatly to be lamented; as in the case of other such "successful" wars, the real losers will be the public, and the cause of excellence itself.

American restaurants have come a long way in a short time. In terms of food alone, the top places (Lespinasse, Le Bernardin, Daniel, Jean Georges, French Laundry, Charlie Trotter's, and the like) have attained rough parity with French three-star restaurants. And now, with ADNY, the same can be said for the non-food aspects of a meal (if not yet the cheeses).

A million negative reviews will not change this reality: ADNY has raised the bar for all other American restaurants, and every chef in New York knows that Alain Ducasse is now the one to beat. So, too, do all those "easily led minds" who have been wise enough to ignore the biases of an increasingly irrelevant class of critics, and lucky enough to get in. One can only hope that theirs will be the vote that prevails.

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Books in Review

Futures Market

Telecosm:
How Infinite Bandwith Will
Revolutionize Our World
by George Gilder
Free Press. 368 pp. $26.00

Reviewed by
Francis Fukuyama

THE INDUSTRIAL Revolution of the 19th century was not perceived as a distinct period of human history until a generation or two after it had taken place. Its greatest contemporary observer, Karl Marx, was positively hostile to the society then being born. By contrast, today's information revolution has been one of the most self-conscious—and self-gratulatory—social transformations in history, producing an extraordinary number of prophets, gurus, and heralds ready to explain and celebrate its nature and its profundity before it has played itself out.

Already in 1980, Alvin Toffler, in *The Third Wave*, announced that the transition we were undergoing was as momentous as the one that took humanity from the hunter-gatherer stage to agriculture. Nicholas Negroponte, Helen Cairncross, Ray Kurzweil, Manuel Castels, Kevin Kelly, Arno Penzias, even politicians like Newt Gingrich and Al Gore have cast themselves as vicars of the new age, and not one of them has adopted Marx's bilious perspective. Instead, depending on the author, it is uniformly seen as good for the economy, good for democracy, and/or good for American values.

The guru of all optimistic gurus is George Gilder, who from the beginning has described the march of information technology in terms both lyrical and apocalyptic. The following characteristic passage occurs toward the end of *Telecosm*:

> Imagine gazing at the Web from far in space. To you, through your spectroscope, mapping the mazes of electromagnetism in its path, the Web appears as a global efflorescence, a resonant sphere of light. It is the physical expression of the converging telecosm, the radiant chrysalis from which will spring a new global economy.

This, to put it mildly, represents a rather rosy view of the typical Internet user's experience of computer crashes and busy signals at AOL.

MUCH OF *Telecosm* will be familiar to the legions of Gilder's fans who have followed his writings over the years in *Forbes ASAP* or in his private newsletter. His basic premise is that the era of the personal computer (PC) is long dead, the victim of its own success. The PC age has been replaced by the bandwidth era (bandwidth being the signal-carrying capacity of a network) exemplified by the Internet.

This is hardly new news. But Gilder is seized by a further technological insight, having to do with the difference between "smart" networks and "dumb" ones. A smart network, one in which circuits pass through switches, is represented by Lucent Technology's massively complex (and hugely expensive) device, the ESS-5, which makes sure that your telephone call is routed along a

FRANCIS FUKUYAMA *is Hirst professor of public policy at George Mason University and the author, most recently, of* The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstruction of Social Order.

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single physical circuit all the way between you and your Aunt Sarah in Toledo. By contrast, the archetype of the dumb network is the ethernet, the local-area-network (LAN) technology, invented by Robert Metcalfe at Xerox, that is used to connect most office computers today. Ethernet is dumb in the sense that, containing no switches, it broadcasts everything to every computer on the network, relying on the intelligence of the receiving computer to pick up only those packets of information intended for it.

According to Gilder's gospel, smart technology is as doomed as the dinosaurs because it is premised on the mistaken view that bandwidth is scarce and needs to be conserved through intelligent networks. To the contrary, he argues: bandwidth, fertilized by new fiber-optic technologies like wave-division multiplexing, is on its way to becoming so plentiful as to be virtually a free good.

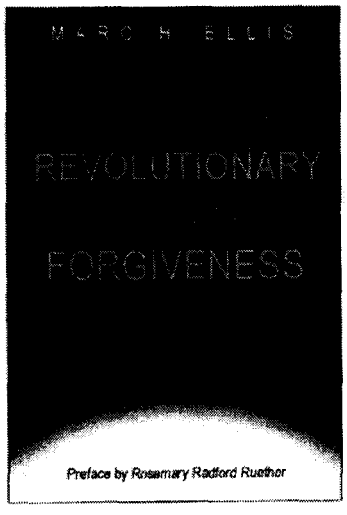
All this may seem somewhat abstruse, but there is a lot of money riding on it. Until now, much Internet traffic has been carried by traditional phone companies (like AT&T or Verizon) on their voice networks. If Gilder is right, not just data but voice calls will soon be carried by newly minted Internet service providers (ISP's) on their new, dumb, but enormously capacious fiber-optic networks. You will no longer be metered by minute and distance (and, in the process, absurdly overcharged) for your calls but will be able to dial anywhere in the U.S. and receive, via the same device, voice calls, Internet access, and, some day, high-bandwidth video.

THERE IS, needless to say, a financial side to all this: from Gilder's analysis of the relative merits of smart and dumb networks there flows a series of policy recommendations—and stock picks—that have been key to his status. Indeed, so respected a sniffer of technological trends has Gilder become that a positive forecast by him can cause the stock of an individual company to soar on the day his newsletter comes out—the so-called Gilder effect. And he has been extraordinarily prescient in many of his forecasts, the most famous of which has to do with Qualcomm, the San Diego cell-phone company that developed a technology called code-division multiple access (CDMA).

For Gilder, CDMA is the wireless equivalent of the ethernet: a way of massively expanding the amount of "spectrum" (the radio version of bandwidth) available for cellular voice-and-data transmission. Gilder has been promoting CDMA and Qualcomm relentlessly since the early 1990's; in 1999, Qualcomm stock increased nearly 2,800 percent when the Europeans accepted CDMA as their next wireless standard. It was the best-performing stock on the NASDAQ in a year in which the hi-tech index broke all records for growth.

But, though he often implies that the best technology, like a force of nature, will ultimately win out, Gilder is a seer only with respect to technology, not politics. When Qualcomm, with the help of the Clinton administration, tried to get China to adopt CDMA, the Chinese balked and found an alternative technology. This caused Qualcomm's stock to fall some 70 percent so far in 2000, making it one of the NASDAQ's *worst* performers this year.

The Qualcomm story thus indirectly offers a good guide to Gilder's strengths and weaknesses. For anyone interested in understanding contemporary trends, *Telecosm* presents a breezy and entertaining introduction to the technologies, companies, and personalities that constitute the information revolution. But Gilder



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invests both his analyses and his predictions with a peculiar moral passion: individuals and companies who have bet on switched networks are not just hapless investors but blinkered agents of reaction, enemies of the general progress of Western civilization. It is not altogether clear why anyone without a direct financial stake should care passionately about whether intelligence resides in the core or the periphery of an electronic network—and anyone *with* a direct financial stake had best exercise common sense.

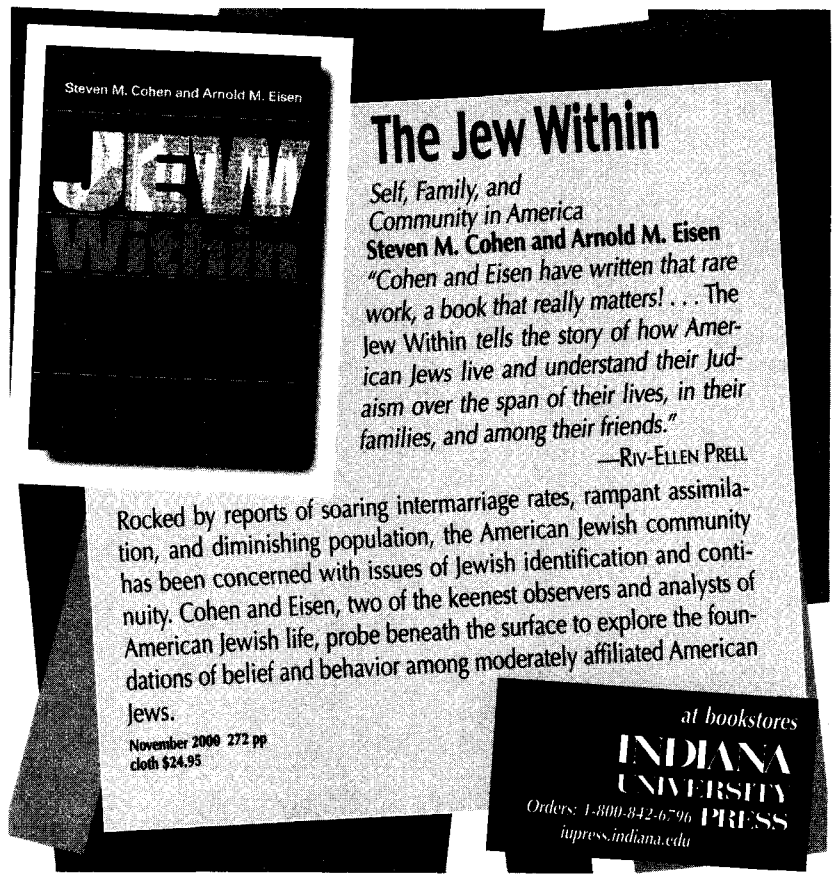
Reading Gilder also raises the question of why information technology should have engendered such widespread messianic feelings. I myself am a technology enthusiast who believes that the information revolution has produced some fairly amazing results. But as in the case of many high-flying NASDAQ valuations, they cannot possibly be *as* amazing as their most enthusiastic cheerleaders believe. As for whether the bandwidth revolution will also lead to a wholesale social transformation comparable to industrialization, or will simply end up being a more effective way of delivering tasteless Hollywood movies to teenagers, that is a question whose answer will only come to us in the fullness of time.

Why, then, do those convinced that the revolution is already triumphant shake their heads so sadly at those of us who "just don't get it"? True, people want to feel good about themselves, and it helps to believe that one is contributing to some higher social purpose while pursuing self-enrichment. But it must also be conceded that the information-technology revolution really does have more going for it than previous advances in, say, steam or internal combustion (or, one suspects, than the coming revolution in biotechnology).

The mechanization of production in the 19th and early 20th centuries rewarded large-scale organization, routinization, uniformity, and centralization. Many of the great works of imagination that accompanied this process, from Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, depicted individuals subsumed by huge machines, often of a political nature. Not so the information revolution, which usually punishes excessively large scale, distributes information and hence power to much larger groups of people, and rewards intelligence, risk, creativity, and education rather than obedience and regimentation. Although one would not wish to push this too far, it is probably no accident that the Soviet Union and other totalitarian regimes did not survive the transition into the information age.

It is also hard to think of a technology with fewer downsides than the Internet: it neither pollutes the water nor threatens the mass destruction of human beings. Although it is possible that our dependence on sophisticated computer networks will leave us vulnerable to new forms of cyberterrorism far more devastating than the recent Melissa or "I love you" viruses, a plausible scenario remains to be demonstrated.

Gilder, instructively, goes farther. With his florid invocations of "radiant strands of silica" and his hype about the unlimited human future, he reminds us that information technology is, today, the closest thing we have to a sphere of heroic action. The best-known advocacy group for civil liberties in cyberspace is the Electronic Frontier Foundation—an appropriate moniker for what has become our equivalent of an uncharted territory full of explorers, gunslingers, desperados, and unmeasured opportunity.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Gilder's specific virtue, and what sets him apart from other gurus, lies precisely in this ability to capture the human striving that lies behind the technology. He sees the process of technological innovation as an end in itself, an act based on creativity and risk-taking and therefore invested with large moral significance. He even convinces us that people may one day remember the stretch of California countryside along Highway 101 much as we today remember Renaissance Florence, a seedbed of something remarkable in the history of human intellect.

That one can also become fabulously wealthy hardly hurts. We live in a fortunate time: Bill Clinton's America may not be one of utter bourgeois mediocrity, but our merits are decidedly commercial rather than republican. Our entrepreneurs need not risk their lives, only their net worth, and even failure, in Silicon Valley, is routinely regarded not as a blot on one's honor but as a necessary rite of passage. If each age gets the prophets it deserves, we are lucky, all in all, that ours is the ardent and vibrantly intelligent George Gilder.

By the Numbers

Counting on the Census? Race, Group Identity, and the Evasion of Politics

by Peter Skerry

Brookings Institution. 261 pp. $25.95

Reviewed by
Naomi Schaefer

IT IS easy to see why people get worked up about abortion, the death penalty, and tax hikes. But it seems odd that our constitutionally mandated decennial census—a subject so steeped in complex statistical formulas and quantitative analysis that the average educated American cannot begin to understand it—should inspire such passionate controversy. And yet it does, with Democrats and Republicans fighting once again, in the midst of an election season, over the thoroughly arcane subject of "adjustment."

The central issue, of course, is who gets counted, and how. According to critics of the current system, minorities and the disadvantaged are being left out because of an "undercount," as a result of which they may be denied their proper representation in government or their fair share of public money. To help us understand what is at stake here, Peter Skerry, a political scientist at Claremont McKenna College, has written *Counting on the Census?* The author previously of *Mexican Americans: The Ambivalent Minority* (1993), Skerry provides a skillful and very timely history of the various controversies involving the census and then lays out, and attempts to assess, the contemporary debate.

THE QUESTION of how to count the U.S. population reaches back, Skerry reminds us, to the Founding, and specifically to Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution. This requires that, for purposes of apportioning representatives, an enumeration be made "within three years after the first meeting of the Congress of the United States and within every subsequent term of ten years." But in (a subsequently repealed passage in) the same article, the Constitution also mandated that the count include not only citizens but also three-fifths of "other persons" (read: slaves) within U.S. borders. From the very first census in 1790, then, it was clear that this exercise was about more than just counting Americans. It entailed counting different kinds of Americans.

Fast-forward, now, to the modern period, when, as Skerry documents, fresh conflict began with the proposal that a question on religious background be included in the 1960 count. Although the move was supported by Catholic organizations, opposition on First Amendment grounds caused the question to be dropped. Yet while religion to this day has remained taboo, race and ethnicity have, in terms of political significance, become *the* central issues in the census.

The first sign of trouble to come occurred when the Nixon administration, responding to pressure, and over the objections of the census director, ordered that a question be added for Hispanic origin. (In addition to blacks, Native Americans had already been specified as a separate group in the 19th century, and "Orientals," meaning Chinese, at the beginning of the 20th.) Then came another new designation, Asian or Pacific Islander (API). Once these broad new categories were in place, much political maneuvering ensued to determine smaller classifications within them. In preparing the 1990 count, for example, the Census Bureau wanted to require that people identifying themselves as Asian or Pacific Islander indicate one of seven subgroups. At the behest of API activists, Congress passed a bill increasing the number of subgroups to nine. This prompted a pocket veto by President Reagan—but the bureau decided to follow Congress's recommendation anyway.

OVER THE last 30 years, minority interest groups have increasingly attempted to influence the census process, with the express purpose of combating an "undercount" which (they say) afflicts them disproportionately. Skerry unravels the strands of this claim. First of all, even with the best will in the world, a perfectly accurate count is not humanly achievable. As things are now organized, the Census Bureau sends written questionnaires to every household in the country. If there is no response within a few weeks, enumerators are sent to conduct the survey in person.

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But inner-city residents, whose ranks are disproportionately made up of minorities, tend to move frequently, making them hard to locate, and heads of household filling out the survey will often omit members who are frequently absent.

There are other problems as well. Language and cultural barriers render it difficult to achieve a full count in some neighborhoods. Recent immigrants are often incapable of filling out the forms, and even among those fluent in English, many misunderstand the purpose of the census, believing they might get into trouble with their landlords if they report too many residents in a particular dwelling, or lose government benefits if they report too few. (Since census data remain entirely anonymous, neither is possible.)

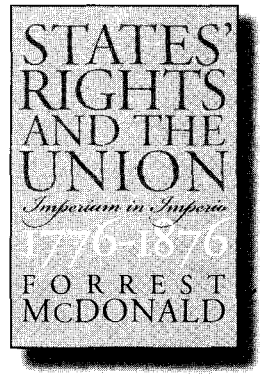
Under such circumstances, an undercount of *some* size is, Skerry writes, inevitable. But, given the scope of the project, the actual undercount is amazingly small, amounting to between 1 and 2 percent of the total population. (In "academic and private-sector research," a former census director has written, "70-90 percent response rates are cause for celebration.") Worse, the remedy proposed for this rather minuscule discrepancy—namely, "adjustment"—is no remedy at all.

Adjustment is accomplished by sampling a small percentage of the original census population and then extrapolating final numbers from the specimen. But sampling, Skerry shows, is vulnerable to at least as many kinds of inaccuracy as is the undercount it is designed to correct. Not only will it be hampered by the same procedural difficulties (high mobility rates, people not wishing to be counted) as the census itself, but workers administering their postenumeration survey will find that many residents of urban neighborhoods are reluctant to open their doors to strangers. In addition, the sheer awareness that an adjustment process will be taking place may reduce the inclination to fill out a census form in the first place.

If census adjustment results in data no more accurate and possibly less accurate than those in the census proper, the amount of money at stake in government resources like block grants also turns out to be quite small. Even in New York City, where a high undercount can be expected, an adjustment of the 1990 census would have resulted in the city's gaining $10 million—"a nice piece of change," as Skerry quotes one economist, "but hardly enough to dent the city's budget for filling potholes."

As for the issue of political representation, the Supreme Court has already ruled that adjustment cannot

States' Rights and the Union
***Imperium in Imperio*, 1776–1876**
Forrest McDonald



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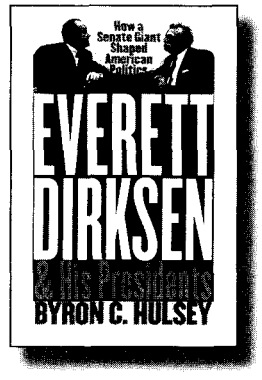

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be used for legislative apportionment. And even if it were so used, Skerry argues, no one could predict what the resultant electoral pattern would look like (since redistricting depends largely on the partisan makeup of state governments) or who would benefit from it.

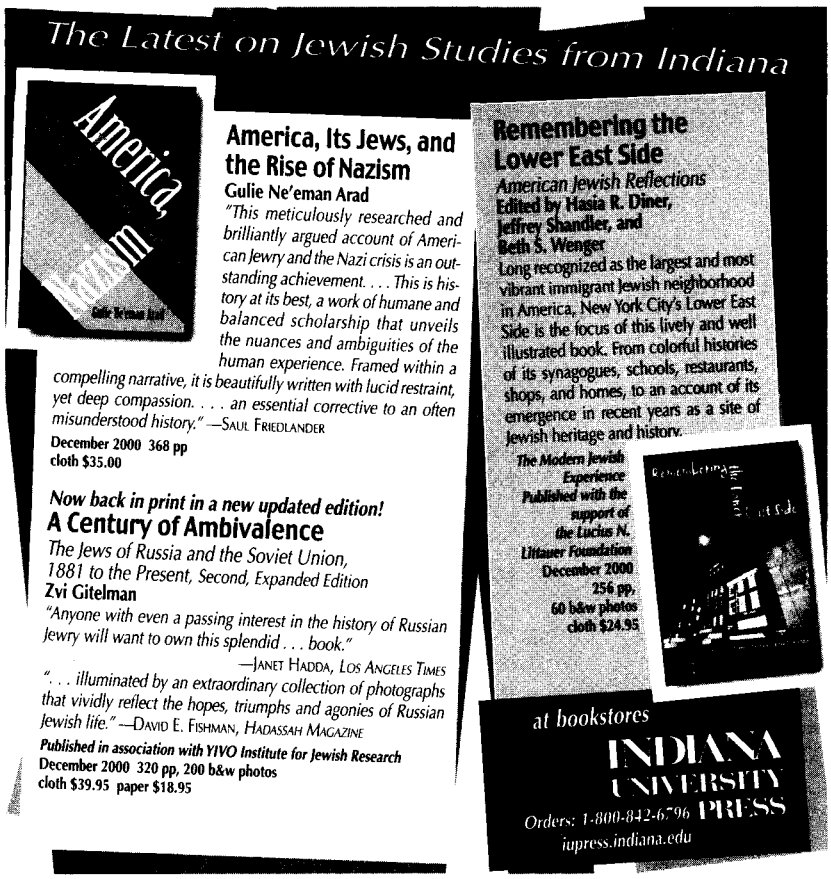
SKERRY'S METHODICAL analysis and moderate conclusions—yes, there is a minority undercount, but it does not present a large problem and it cannot be fixed with sampling and adjustment—are a welcome contribution to the current debate. His eye for the telling detail—"anywhere from two-thirds to three-fourths of the 1990 undercount," he notes quietly at one point, "were nonblacks, mostly whites"—enables him to cut through much racial propaganda, and his thorough command both of the statistical issues themselves and of their implications for public policy is refreshing, to say the least. If facts and commonsense arguments were decisive, this book would put an end to the census controversy.

Alas, facts and arguments notwithstanding, there is no sign that ethnic politicians or interest-group leaders are about to let go of the issue of the undercount any time soon. Which leaves the rest of us to ponder the long-term harm being done by our current approach to counting Americans. For one thing, the public has been given the distinct impression—including by the Census Bureau itself—that the major benefit that accrues to individuals from filling out the questionnaire is, precisely, a bigger slice of the federal pie. That, indeed, was the not so subtle message of the prime-time television ads run by the bureau this past spring, which bore the tagline: "It's your future. Don't leave it blank."

For another thing, in asking citizens to identify themselves by race, the government implicitly encourages us, especially in today's polarized climate, to think of ourselves as *separated* by race. As Lawrence Wright observed in a much-discussed 1994 *New Yorker* article, "The use of racial statistics . . . creates a reality of racial divisions which then require solutions, such as busing, affirmative action, and multicultural education, all of which are bound to fail, because they heighten the racial awareness that leads to contention."

Skerry dismisses such worries as "alarmist," observing that even those who voice them—he cites the economist Thomas Sowell—rely on census data in their research. But using these data for research purposes is hardly the same thing as endorsing the way they are collected, let alone the way they are deployed by others. The fact is that leaders of ethnic interest groups do now routinely encourage their members to fill out the census forms so that public officials and candidates will be aware just how loud—and how uniform—their voice can be. On the same grounds, some black spokesmen oppose any move to allow people to describe themselves as "mixed-race" on the questionnaire, lest it weaken black influence.

Manipulative politics of this kind is almost enough to make one wish that, once slavery was abolished in America, racial questions had been stricken from the census altogether. Just as answering census questions in order to get more federal money skews the way we think about the role of government in our lives, the use of the census as a mechanism of racial identification and politicking further weakens our already frayed civic unity—and undermines the legitimate and necessary purposes of the census itself. Such, at any rate,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are some of the troubling thoughts that arise from reading Peter Skerry's sorely needed book.

Tribal Warfare

Jew vs. Jew:
The Struggle for the Soul of American Jewry
by Samuel G. Freedman
Simon & Schuster. 375 pp. $26.00

Reviewed by
Jay P. Lefkowitz

In his 1908 play, *The Melting Pot*, the Anglo-Jewish writer Israel Zangwill romanticized the New World as a place where Jews could freely marry Christians and "where all races and nations come to look forward." How prophetic he was: today, nearly a hundred years later, the intermarriage rate among American Jews stands at well over 50 percent.

Needless to say, this statistic, and others like it, have hardly brought joy to the organized Jewish community, which now devotes much time and money to projects aimed at discouraging intermarriage and promoting Jewish "continuity." Unfortunately, at the same time that energies are engaged on this front, another, no less alarming threat faces American Jews from a different quarter.

Despite constituting less than 3 percent of the nation's population, American Jews are, today, a highly fractured group, one whose distinct subcommunities have almost no connection with, much less respect for, each other. In the religious sphere, bitter and ongoing disputes divide the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform movements over issues such as the standards for conversion to Judaism, the ordination of women and their participation in religious services, and the question of same-sex marriage—so bitter, indeed, that the interdenominational Synagogue Council of America was disbanded several years ago when Orthodox rabbis refused to participate in an organization that included Reform rabbis. Insoluble splits within American Jewry exist on the political level as well. In 1995, organizers of a memorial service for the recently assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin were forced to ban any reference to the "peace process" in order to satisfy groups opposed to the Oslo agreements.

Jay P. Lefkowitz *is a practicing attorney in Washington, D.C. and has written on matters of Jewish interest for* Commentary *and other periodicals.*

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In his provocative new book, Samuel Freedman brings this internal dissension into sharp focus. A former *New York Times* reporter and the author of three earlier books about life in contemporary America, Freedman writes about six communities across the United States. In a small village north of New York City and in a suburb of Cleveland, he looks at animosity between secular and religious Jews; in Denver, he reports on the ongoing struggle over the question of "who is a Jew"; in West Los Angeles, he observes the battle in the Conservative and modern-Orthodox movements to address demands by women for a greater role in religious affairs; and in New Haven, he attends to the increasing tensions within Orthodoxy itself.

Perhaps the dominant theme of Freedman's book is the surprising reemergence in our day of religious Judaism, a development that has in turn given rise to all manner of tensions with secular Jews. (*Jew vs. Jew* was, of course, written well before the choice of Senator Joseph Lieberman, a member of an Orthodox synagogue, as Al Gore's running mate, with all the complications *that* has introduced into the American Jewish equation.) In illustration, he contrasts the thriving hasidic village of Kiryas Joel near New York with what remains of the outlook represented by an old Labor Zionist summer camp that once stood a few miles away.

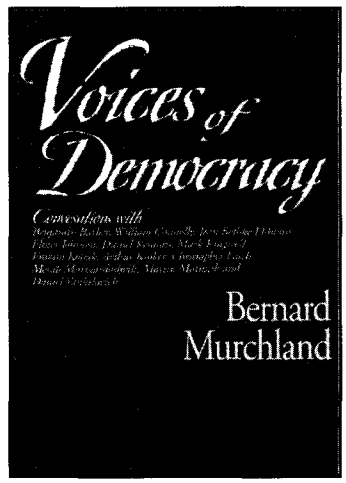
For nearly a half-century, until it closed its doors in 1971, Camp Kinderwelt was a summertime haven for Jewish youth in the New York area. It embodied what was once the dominant spirit of American Jewish life: nonreligious, socialist, Zionist, ethnic. Today, Camp Kinderwelt is both physically and spiritually dead, its brand of "*Yiddishkeit*" on display mostly in the archives of Jewish museums or in the works of a writer like the late Irving Howe. But even Howe, as Freedman points out, recognized at the end of his life that neither willpower nor nostalgia could halt the decline of Jewish secularism as an ideology.

By contrast, the ultra-Orthodox Kiryas Joel is booming. This hamlet, incorporated by a handful of Satmar Hasidim from the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn in 1977, today boasts a population of more than 12,000. In an effort to re-create the self-sufficient communities they left behind in Eastern Europe, the residents of Kiryas Joel have built their own infrastructure, complete not only with synagogues, kosher food stores and restaurants, and *mikvahs* (ritual baths) but also with newspapers and department stores and a school system that educates more than 5,000 children. While many of the men and some of the women of Kiryas Joel commute to work in New York City's diamond district, they do so on private buses that have been fitted with partitions to enable male passengers to pray separately from the women, as is required by religious law.

The two communities represented by Kiryas Joel and Camp Kinderwelt have almost nothing in common—except mutual disdain. When Freedman informs the mayor of Kiryas Joel that a secular Zionist summer camp once thrived just up the road but has since failed, the mayor responds: "Secular Zionism *is* failure." At a reunion of former Kinderwelt campers, now middle-aged parents of mostly intermarried children, Freedman hears the Satmars dismissed in turn as "greasy Jews" who "smell like cholera" and, in the opinion of one ex-camper, are "the kind of people who are against everything I stand for."

It is not only between out-and-out secular Jews and the Orthodox that feelings run so high. In his chapter on Beachwood, Ohio, an affluent suburb of Cleveland, Freedman describes how a small group of Orthodox Jews, seeking zoning approval for a campus containing a synagogue, *mikvah*, social hall, and

New from Notre Dame



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school, ran into intense opposition by a group of local Reform Jews. Ironically, the latter had themselves faced strong resistance from the non-Jewish citizens of Beachwood in the early 1950's; in both instances, the argument for keeping out newcomers was the same—a desire "to preserve our beautiful Beachwood community." Inevitably, the latest battle has left casualties, and an enduring residue of intracommunal bitterness.

Among the three principal Jewish denominations, the most contentious issues of all relate to Jewish identity. They arise in part from the different standards set by rabbis in each group for conversion, as well as from the fact that the Reform movement alone embraces the principle of patrilineal descent—i.e., that (in contravention of Jewish religious law) the child of a Jewish mother *or* father should be considered Jewish. Most Orthodox rabbis do not accept the validity of conversions performed by Conservative or, certainly, Reform rabbis, and many children of Reform Jews are not considered Jewish by either the Orthodox or the Conservative movement.

These issues are tearing at the seams of American Jewry, and defying the best-intentioned efforts at resolving them. One such effort was started in the mid-1970's in Denver, where, as Freedman reports, a group of rabbis representing each of the three principal denominations began a bold (and largely secretive) experiment in joint conversion. The basic rules were that any prospective convert would be trained principally by the rabbi of his or her denomination, then evaluated by a panel consisting of an Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform rabbi, and finally converted by an Orthodox *bet din*, or rabbinical court. During its six-year history, the project "graduated" 175 students, the vast majority of them brought in by Reform rabbis.

Throughout the experiment, however, the three Orthodox rabbis felt both that their role was extraneous to the process and that their participation was "theologically fraudulent." (They often met the prospective converts for the first time at the ritual bath, immersion in which marks the penultimate moment before conversion.) Further exacerbating tensions was the decision of the Reform movement in 1982 to adopt patrilineal descent; in that same year, the program imploded.

The Denver project spotlighted not only the rift between Orthodox and Reform Jews but, Freedman explains, a division within Orthodoxy itself, a movement increasingly torn between its "modern" and its "ultra-Orthodox" or "*haredi*" wings. In Denver, ultra-Orthodox Jews condemned the three participating Orthodox rabbis for their willingness to officiate at religious ceremonies in the company of Reform Jews, and even the Rabbinical Council of America, the group to which all three belonged, mounted a formal investigation into "their reliability, credibility, and integrity."

Nor are the Orthodox the only group riven by internal dissension—and neither, finally, are the fissures in the Jewish community limited to matters of religion. In a chapter on Jacksonville, Florida, Freedman tells the story of a young man who, in his zeal to thwart the Middle East peace process, placed a bomb in a synagogue where Shimon Peres was scheduled to deliver a lecture. This leads Freedman into a discussion of disagreements among American Jews concerning Israeli politics, itself an exceedingly complex subject.

THE PORTRAIT Freedman paints is, in sum, discouraging. Not only, to hear him tell it, is there far more discord than common ground in American Jewish life, but none of the traditional unifying forces—the need to combat anti-Semitism, the consensual embrace of liberalism, even support for Israel—is as relevant as it was in the past.

To replace these outmoded indicia of Jewish identity, Freedman looks, perhaps paradoxically, to religion itself as the one force that over the long term can yet protect American Jewry from assimilation. And when it comes to religion, he writes, it is the "Orthodox model" that "has triumphed" and deserves to triumph. This does not mean that only those Jews will survive who are Orthodox themselves; rather, "the portion of American Jewry that will flourish in the future—and is flourishing already against a backdrop of ever more assimilation—is the portion that has accepted the central premise of Orthodoxy that religion defines Jewish identity."

To support this conclusion, Freedman cites indications from the last decade of a creeping "traditionalism" even within the Reform and Conservative movements. Thus, the governing board of Reform rabbis has commended "the ongoing study of the whole array of *mitzvot*"—reversing, as Freedman observes, that movement's "historical contempt for ritual and religious law"—while the Conservative movement has recently mounted a campaign to encourage its laity to read a chapter of the Bible every day (mirroring the Orthodox practice of studying a page of Talmud daily). He also notes a 1996 statement by the American Jewish Committee, a secular organization, that places Torah atop a list of five fundamental values for Jewish continuity.

But despite these heartening developments, Freedman's portrait ends on a pessimistic note. Not only does Orthodox Judaism demand more than most American Jews are willing to give—"a pattern of obligations and responsibilities, a web of mutuality"—but the contentious state of Orthodox Judaism itself suggests that this movement is in no position to help overcome the dissension that plagues the larger community. As the Denver episode illustrates, the modern Orthodox are on the defensive vis-à-vis the ultra-Orthodox, while the ultra-Orthodox themselves, with the notable exception of the Lubavitcher Ha-

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sidim, have little use for the millions of nonaffiliated American Jews, and perhaps even less for Conservative and Reform Jews who, they believe, treat the dictates of Jewish law as if they were items to pick and choose on an old-style Chinese menu.

Which leaves Freedman, and his readers, in a bit of a black hole: if Orthodoxy is not a realistic prescription for the whole of American Jewry, what then? A Zionist thinker who considered this very question early on was Ahad Ha-am (the pen name of Asher Ginsberg, 1856-1927). In pondering how the Jews of modernity could ensure the survival of their spirit and culture in a post-Enlightenment world, Ahad Ha-am proposed an educational program blending the secular, religious, cultural, and nationalistic elements of Judaism into what he termed a "national spiritual center." "Learning, learning, learning; that is the secret of Jewish survival," Ahad Ha-am wrote in 1910. "We have to make our synagogue itself a house of study, with Jewish learning as its first concern and prayer as a secondary matter."

As it happens, one of the few bright spots on the American Jewish landscape has been the proliferation of Jewish day schools—not just Orthodox but Reform and Conservative as well. Over the last 35 years, the number of such schools has more than doubled (from 323 to 670), and the number of students enrolled in them has risen from 63,500 to over 185,000. As the historian Jack Wertheimer wrote last year in these pages ("Who's Afraid of Jewish Day Schools?," December 1999), the challenge to the organized community is not only to make such schools more affordable, but also to make them academically attractive to families whose first priority is getting their children into top colleges. While some may believe that the most important Jewish endeavor is to fight the remnants of anti-Semitism, others to memorialize the Holocaust, and still others to support Israel, even more critical than these worthy efforts may be a sustained, well-financed campaign to educate the Jewish young.

Victimology

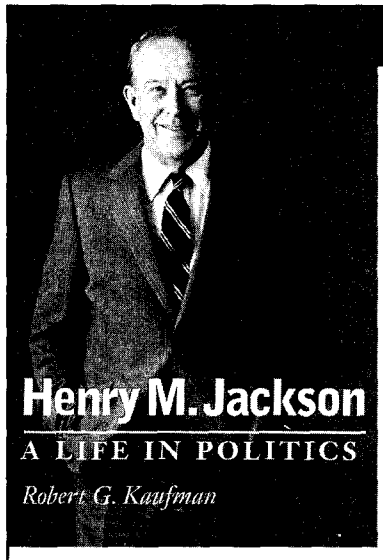
Losing the Race:
Self-Sabotage in Black America
by John H. McWhorter
Free Press. 285 pp. $24.00

Reviewed by
Damon Linker

BY ANY measurable standard, the advances of black Americans over the past several generations have been remarkable. Yet, for every statistic indicating that blacks have moved into the mainstream of American life, there is something or other that many blacks take to be evidence of a poisonous and abiding racism, from white America's refusal to entertain "reasonable doubts" about the case against O.J. Simpson to the killing of Amadou Diallo by white members of the New York police department. If black teenagers tend to perform below their white counterparts on the SAT, or the incarceration rate is far higher for blacks than whites, this, too, is said to be a sign of racial prejudice.

The sad fact is that, for all the progress African-Americans have made since the 1960's, they have the dubious distinction of having become some of the country's most avid producers and consumers of what the historian Richard Hofstadter called the "paranoid style in

DAMON LINKER, *here making his first appearance in* COMMENTARY, *has written for* National Review, Policy Review, *and the* Wall Street Journal.



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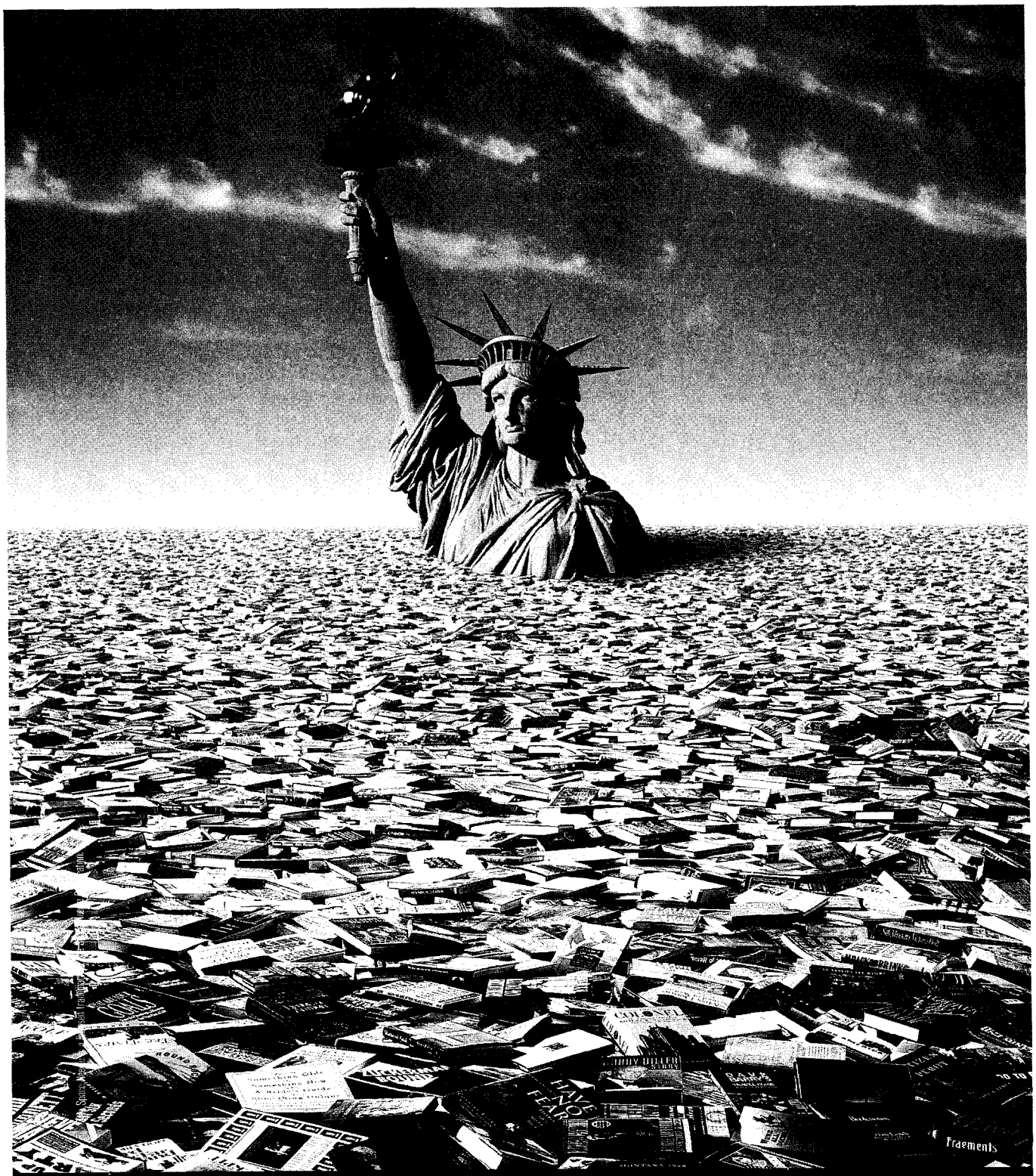

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American politics." Nor, apparently, is this paranoia susceptible of being defused by reasonable argument, which in recent years has been in abundant supply. Authors like Shelby Steele, Stanley Crouch, and Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom have attained notoriety in public-policy circles, and earned the execration of the vast majority of black academics and intellectuals, by questioning the reigning orthodoxies of the black community, and by venturing alternative explanations for the social pathologies that, despite the many gains, continue to afflict much of black America.

Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America is the latest, and arguably the most anguished, book in this dissenting school of thought. A black professor of linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley, John McWhorter may seem an unlikely candidate to lead the charge against the self-deceptive outlook of many blacks and those who, in his view, "unwittingly encourage" it. Yet his own experience has convinced him that "black America is currently caught in certain ideological holding patterns that are today much, much more serious barriers to black well-being than is white racism." Acknowledging that such views may brand him as a traitor among his friends and colleagues, McWhorter nonetheless makes clear his determination to alert blacks to the attitudes and beliefs within their own community that "preserve and reinforce their status as 'other,' and a pitiable, weak, and unintelligent 'other' at that."

According to McWhorter, the "self-sabotage" of black America primarily manifests itself in three ways. To begin with, there is the "cult of victimology," which treats "victimhood not as a problem to be solved but as an identity to be nurtured." From their youngest days, he writes, African-Americans are encouraged "to fixate upon remnants of racism and resolutely downplay all signs of its demise," an attitude that ends up convincing them that they possess less power and freedom than they actually do.

When victimology is combined with separatism—the second element in McWhorter's indictment—the results are socially disastrous. As young blacks are taught that their status as sufferers makes them "an unofficial sovereign entity" within American society, many draw the conclusion that they are "morally exempt" from "the rules other Americans are expected to follow." Indeed, McWhorter is bold enough to suggest that this stubborn rejection of the social norms prevailing in non-black America explains why blacks continue to be hired and promoted in the corporate world at lower rates than whites.

Still more damaging, by McWhorter's lights, is the final element in the self-sabotage of black America: anti-intellectualism. As he points out (and he is not alone in this), it is common for intelligent black students to face unusually severe peer pressure from other black children who accuse them of "selling out" and "becoming white" if they do well in school. This tendency to treat ignorance as a mark of authenticity, McWhorter contends, is what leads so many middle-class black students to earn "substandard grades even in well-funded suburban school where teachers are making Herculean, culturally sensitive efforts to reach them."

In a more personal vein, McWhorter also explores at great length the debilitating psychological effects of affirmative action. In secondary school, he writes, he himself "quite deliberately refrained from working to my highest potential because I knew that I would be accepted to even top universities without doing

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so." For talented blacks, indeed, such decisions are rational—since "almost every black child knows from an early age that there is something called affirmative action which means that black students are admitted to schools under lower standards than whites." But the process is also deeply insidious: for all the emphasis placed on "self-esteem" by today's educators and policy-makers, affirmative action deprives individual blacks of the knowledge that their accomplishments have been justly earned, thus systematically undermining their sense of self-worth.

Nor does McWhorter have any patience for the rather different psychology that prevails among the most vocal *white* proponents of affirmative action. Indeed, he saves his most trenchant remarks for those academics and intellectuals who, out of guilt for past injustices, help to perpetuate the "liberal consensus" on preferential policies. William Bowen and Derek Bok, the former presidents of Princeton and Harvard, come in for especially harsh words for their much-publicized book defending affirmative action,* as does the legal theorist Ronald Dworkin. But the main burden of McWhorter's ire falls on the sociologist Nathan Glazer, who famously dropped his long-standing opposition to affirmative action in 1998 just as several states were finally beginning to reverse the policy. Glazer may wish "to atone for what was done" by past generations, McWhorter writes, but the effectual truth of his quest for absolution is to turn young blacks into "mythic victims," as if he "were writing a play rather than grappling with living breathing human beings in the present tense."

THOUGH SOME readers might wish that McWhorter had broadened his critique to include the civil-rights establishment and its minions in the Democratic party, *Losing the Race* is an extraordinarily courageous book. Today's elite college campuses are among the last places one is likely to hear a genuinely open debate about race. The officially sanctioned view is that popular initiatives like California's Proposition 209 (which banned the use of racial preferences by the state or its agencies) are self-evidently evil. McWhorter has dared to break with this consensus.

The result, one fears, will be the academic equivalent of excommunication. As McWhorter himself recognizes, his book is unlikely even to be read by his colleagues, who are more likely to dismiss it out of hand than to take issue with it. His willingness to endure such treatment in the name of defending certain unpalatable truths is something for which his readers—not to mention untold numbers of young blacks still struggling for a "normal" life in America—are deeply in his debt.

Left Out

It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States

by Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Wolfe Marks

Norton. 384 pp. $26.95

Reviewed by
Arch Puddington

"THE UNITED States will be the first to usher in a socialist republic," predicted August Bebel, the leader of the German Social Democratic party, in 1907. A contemporary, Karl Kautsky, the German party's leading theoretician, was equally sanguine: class conflict, he believed, was "overdue" in America, and developing "more sharply" there than anywhere else in the world.

Bebel, Kautsky, and other European observers based their judgments in part on the growing power of the American Socialist party during the early years of the 20th century. In 1912, candidates on the party's slate were elected to municipal offices across the country, and its leader, Eugene V. Debs, running for the presidency, received fully 6 percent of the national vote.

But 1912 also proved to be a high-water mark. A brief eight years later, the party lay in ruins, its leader Debs serving a prison term for agitation against World War I, its ties to the trade-union movement and the electorate sundered. While, in the decades to come, social-democratic and labor parties were to emerge as powerful electoral forces throughout Europe and the English-speaking world, no radical left-wing party was ever to achieve such a foothold in the United States.

Why not? This particular aspect of American exceptionalism has long vexed social scientists, and *It Didn't Happen Here* is only the latest, if also the most thorough and judicious, attempt to solve a classic historiographical puzzle. Eschewing abstract theorizing and grand pronouncements, Seymour Martin Lipset, the distinguished sociologist, and Gary Marks, a political scientist at the University of North Carolina, proceed by carefully weighing the various explanations that have been advanced by others to account for the failure of a mass socialist movement to materialize. In the end, they settle on a modest conclusion that focuses on a combination of historical, political, and cultural factors.

ARCH PUDDINGTON *is vice president for research at Freedom House and the author, most recently, of* Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, *reviewed in* COMMENTARY *last month by Mark Falcoff.*

* For an extended discussion, see "Racial Preferences: What We Now Know" by Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom in COMMENTARY, February 1999.

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One simple rationale for socialism's lack of success, advanced by some on the Left, is, in a word, repression. Left-wing movements have never caught on in the U.S., it is said, because as soon as one has shown signs of growth, it has been immediately confronted with a wave of government persecution. Surveying the evidence behind this claim, Lipset and Marks pronounce it grossly insufficient. Though American history has been punctuated by a number of anti-socialist and anti-Communist crusades, most notably in the wake of both world wars, socialist parties in Europe have faced political and legal restraints much more intense than anything in the United States, and still managed to achieve far more.

If repression is not the answer, neither is another favored explanation, which has to do with the fundamental structure of the American political order and in particular the confines of the two-party framework. These, it is claimed, offer a decisive barrier to radical movements. Yet once again Lipset and Marks are skeptical. Third parties, they note, have not *always* fared poorly in presidential elections, as witness the impressive showings of Robert LaFollette on the Progressive line in 1924, George Wallace on the American Independent line in 1968, and Ross Perot on the Reform ticket in 1992. It is only *socialist* third parties that have made little headway at the polls.

This points to what, in the view of Lipset and Marks, have been the real underlying inhibitions on the progress of socialism in the United States: namely, the absence, on the one hand, of rigid class distinctions or of a popular resentment of capitalism and the presence, on the other hand, of a highly individualistic ethos. These signal attributes of American culture have created inhospitable soil for any movement founded on both class conflict and a collectivist vision.

This same infertile soil may indeed be responsible (dialectically, as it were) for a unique characteristic of American socialism that is stressed by Lipset and Marks: its rigidity and dogmatism. Whereas, for example, both the British Labor party and the German Social Democrats have repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to jettison unpopular positions and abandon Marxist principles to expand their political base, socialists in the United States have repeatedly held to a pattern of unbending ideological rigor. Thus, during and after World War I, the party not only trespassed on the patriotic sentiments of American workers by opposing U.S. intervention in Europe, but compounded its difficulties by adopting a stridently anticlerical line that held little attraction for the movement's natural constituency.

A similar lack of pragmatism was on display with respect to immigration. Instead of appealing to the thousands upon thousands of newcomers making their way to this land in the early decades of the century, many socialist leaders embraced a nativist position. This posture was made all the more absurd by the fact that the Socialist party was itself thoroughly dominated by recent immigrants, a circumstance that repelled native workers already prone to regard socialism as an un-American creed.

Lipset and Marks are convincing enough in their analysis of socialism's failure to "happen here." But they are somewhat less persuasive when they turn in their final chapter to the effect of that failure on American society. In their view, the United States is in certain significant respects worse off for never having had a mass, social-demo-

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cratic party. While this outcome has produced high living standards for many Americans, it has contributed to rates of poverty and inequality that are also considerably higher than in countries where the more typical European pattern has prevailed.

Such comparisons, however, fail to take into account a number of other distinctive aspects of the American scene, including the lasting legacy of slavery and longstanding immigration policies that have encouraged the entry of impoverished and uneducated workers from around the world. Whether one is measuring inequality, mortality and morbidity, or poverty rates, one cannot understand America's less than stellar global ranking in social indicators without factoring in the substantial presence in our history of poor blacks and poor immigrants.

At the same time, it is also fairly clear that the *absence* of an overweening public sector or a full-blown social-democratic welfare system has been a positive factor in America's ability to adapt to technological change and to the rise of a global trading system. While the U.S. has prospered in the new economic environment, the social democracies of Europe, precisely because of the burden of layer upon layer of socialist-style regulation and redistributionist welfare measures, have found adjustment far more painful, and suffer from low productivity and high unemployment. If one is going to give credit to socialist parties for their material "accomplishments," one also has to acknowledge the material costs.

IN THE end, the conundrum explored by Lipset and Marks is full of lessons for the contemporary scene. America today is far more prosperous than could have been imagined in the days of Eugene Debs. And with the consignment of the USSR to history's dustbin, the socialist idea has by and large collapsed. But the American Left remains in some sense unchanged. The mindlessness of the radicalism on display in Seattle during the World Trade Organization meetings and in Philadelphia and Los Angeles during the political conventions, complete with vandalism directed at companies where large numbers of lower-income workers are employed, was no mere accident. Having abandoned its chimerical objective of abolishing private control of the American economy in favor of an equally chimerical campaign against international trade and "globalism," the radical Left has been deploying its characteristic formula for failure—ideological extremism—in an up-to-date guise. In skillfully illuminating the roots of this ineffectual tradition, *It Didn't Happen Here* makes a valuable contribution to historical understanding.

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Make Money Off My Sickness . . . Pleas

avid R. Henderson is a esearch fellow, Hoover nstitution; economics professor, Naval stgraduate School; and rmer senior economist for health policy, President's Council of Economic Advisers.

Last May, Senator Paul Wellstone said of pharmaceutical companies, "We have an industry that makes exorbitant profits off sickness, misery, and illness of people and that is obscene." In a literal sense, he is right: health care providers do make money off our sickness, just as the food industry makes money off our hunger. But the food industry doesn't make money by keeping us hungry; it makes money by feeding us. Similarly, the **health care firms make money, not by keeping us sick but by making us *well.***

One day five years ago I was unable to keep liquids in my body, and I lost almost ten pounds in less than twenty-four hours. My wife took me to the hospital, where I was put in a nice quiet room in a clean, wonderfully comfortable bed, and an intravenous device pumped about eight pounds of fluid into my body. I slept twenty-two of the next twenty-four hours. The bill for one day, slightly over $2,000, was mostly covered by my health insurance. But I would have gladly paid every penny. My doctor later told me that, had I stayed home that evening, I might have died. For the next few months, whenever I drove by that hospital, I cheered. The men and women working there don't know me but spent their best energy making me well and, maybe, saving my life. And, however much they like helping people heal, they would not have been there if someone hadn't paid them. They made money off my sickness. Bless them.

And thank goodness countless other strangers all around the world are working late at night in labs, trying and trying again to find drugs that will cure sicknesses that I, or those I care about, will probably have in the future. What motivates many of them, besides their belief in their work, is that a drug company is paying them. What motivates the drug company is the large revenue it can earn by developing drugs that cure diseases and save lives. We live in a wonderful time, a time when we can realistically dream of curing diseases that we so far have had to accept. I sure as hell do want people making money finding cures for my sicknesses.

I'm angry at Wellstone for pushing for a new Medicare drug benefit. Medicare now sets price controls on hospital care and on doctors' care received by the elderly. No matter how much the elderly are willing to pay for such services, the federal government won't allow them to pay more than it decrees. The result is that older people, even if they are willing to pay, often can't get the medical care they want. If the federal government begins a drug benefit, I predict that within ten years it will forbid the elderly from paying more than its stingy rates. **Price controls will discourage development of new drugs,** which could cause me, or you, to die needlessly. Now *that's* obscene.

— David R. Henderson

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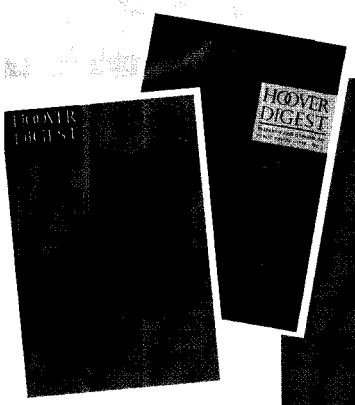

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